



SocialErasmus+ Academic Framework 1.2

How to Validate &
Recognize SocialErasmus
in Higher Education

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Youth for Exchange and Understanding



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Erasmus Student Network Besançon

SocialErasmus+ Academic Framework

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Validation & Recognition

There are various methods of recognition, each with specific characteristics, conditions and (dis) advantages. Depending on the programme, institution, context and implementation of the SocialErasmus+ activities a form of academic or extracurricular recognition will be preferred. In this paper we will expand on a range of recognition methods both as an active part of the curriculum or as an extracurricular activity that could be applied.

Embedding SocialErasmus+ in the Curriculum

In the previous chapter we have expanded on various reasons for embedding SocialErasmus+ in the curriculum. “Non-professional” activities such as volunteering can be actively integrated into the student learning process, making their overall higher education experience more dynamic and formative and making their participation very active in the society. These learnings based on educational innovation have been developing in the last decade.

Formal education within Higher education does not provide all the tools to succeed in modern societies. In order to enable the committed student to develop skills and knowledge and to have a rich social life, the institutions rely on associative structures or other organizations and offer new forms of learning focused on volunteering with an educational dimension. The job market changes and this calls for a different approach by universities, hence the third mission of universities. Adding experiential learning to the curriculum is an asset for the development of soft skills f.e. teamwork, communication and reflection. Reflection is essential in providing students with the skills to leverage their involvements in their future endeavours.

Reflection
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This reflection process enables students to critically assess their learning outside of the classroom and inform their future involvement choices. In addition to providing a means for self-assessment, it also assists students in developing the ability to engage in self-reflection and assessment of an experience and the outcomes achieved through a process, both skills which are relevant post-graduation (Mahal K., 2012).

SE+ as core-element of the learning agreement

“The purpose of a Learning Agreement is to provide a transparent and efficient preparation of the exchange to make sure the student receives recognition for the activities successfully completed abroad.

The Learning Agreement sets out the programme of the studies or the traineeship to be followed abroad and must be approved by the student, the sending and the receiving institution, organisation or enterprise before the start of the exchange.

To offer full recognition of the Learning experience of the student, it is advised to officially embed the activities in the curricula of the student and recognise it officially with ECTS credits during the exchange period. By including the activities in the Learning Agreement it institutionalises the learning, which requires a more elaborate framework to be worked out by the University in order to establish concrete procedures. In the following pages three methods of are being explained on how to include SocialErasmus in curricula.

SE+ as Service-Learning module

Service-Learning (sometimes referred to as community based or community engaged learning) is an innovative pedagogical approach that integrates meaningful community service or engagement into the curriculum and offers students academic credit for the learning that derives from active engagement within community and work on a real world problem (Aramburuzabala P., McIlrath L., et al., 2016). Reflection and experiential learning strategies underpin the learning process and the service is link to the academic discipline.

Service-Learning is a credit-bearing educational experience in which students participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility. Unlike extracurricular voluntary service, Service-Learning is a course based service experience that produces the best outcomes when meaningful service activities are related to course material through reflection activities such as directed writings, small group discussions, and class presentations. Unlike practica and internships, the experiential activity in a Service-Learning course is not necessarily skill- based within the context of professional education.

Service-Learning provides an additional means for reaching educational objectives, and academic credit is appropriate for service activities when learning objectives associated with the service are identified and evaluated. Faculty who use service learning discover that it brings new life to the classroom, enhances performance on traditional measures of learning, increases student interest in the subject, teaches new problem solving skills, and makes teaching more enjoyable. In addition, service learning expands course objectives to include civic education (Bringle R., & Hatcher, 1996).

Direct Service-Learning: person-to-person, face-to-face service projects in which the students' service directly impacts individuals who receive the service from the students. Ex: tutoring students, children, adults

Indirect Service-Learning: working on broad issues, environmental projects, or community development-projects that have clear benefits to the community or environment, but not necessarily to individually identified people with whom the students are working. Ex: Helping to restore ecosystems in preserve areas.

The EuropeEngage project developed a set of quality indicators for Service-Learning projects. (Stark et al. 2016)

1. Meet Actual Real Needs

Service-Learning (S-L) meets both real world challenges of the community, is meaningful and relevant to community partners and students. Issues vital to social, civic, cultural, economic and political society are explored

2. Partnership

Community organisations are valued as partners.

3. Reciprocity

There is a flow of knowledge, information and benefits in both directions between the University and its community partners in activities.

4. Defined goals

Reachable and measureable, for the specific S-L project. Goals and values are discussed with the community partner.

5. Link to Curriculum

S-L is linked to the curriculum/study program of students. This requires active involvement of teachers/academic staff, systematic integration

in study programs and the option to be recognized. Credit recognition is present.

6. Civic learning

Relied to personal and social competencies, as an important category of students learning goals (beside academic learning goals).

7. Learning in Real World Settings

Academic theory is viewed in a real world context. The main learning setting in S-L is located outside the classroom in real world settings of community partners. It offers opportunities to learn and deepen understanding for all participants (students, faculty and community partners)

8. Students´ active participation

Students actively collaborate with community partners in the design and planning of the project.

9. Facilitate systematic Student Reflection

S-L facilitates active, regular and ongoing student reflection guided by teaching personnel and/or community partners. Reflection should lead to understand diverse perspectives of challenges. For students it is important to link their experiences to the theoretical and methodological background of the subject

10. Ensure support and coaching for students

Both from academic staff and from community partners.

11. Offer adequate time frames

In order to make experiences and learn in community settings/with community partners effective and sustainable)

12. Include evaluation and documentation

As integral parts of S-L activities, in order to prepare a final presentation of the results evaluated by community partners. Transparent evaluation.

13. Values transdisciplinarity

The service-learning activity is transdisciplinary

14. Sustainability

Impact of the activity in the community after the closing of the Project.

Benefits

- Community service is academically rewarded
- (learning) Objectives more defined for beneficiaries
- More active and in depth learning
- Develop personal and academic skills related to classes
- Understand the link between theory and practice
- Activate and engage students : with hosting society
- Development of more sustainable partnerships
- Increase social impact of University

Challenges

- Intrinsic motivation of student could be biased (eg. When not an optional course)
- Demanding in term of work for the professor
- Structured and organized = Less flexibility around the activities
- Changing curriculum is challenging
- Curricula are “full”, hard to make changes



Implementation process

Implementing high quality Service-Learning requires several key components. The iPERCED model offers a structure for Service-Learning that encourages thoughtful planning and execution.

- **Investigation:** Process of identifying community needs, exploring potential community partnerships, and determining if/how community engagement fits into course learning goals and objectives
- **Preparation:** Action steps to identify expectations, responsibilities, and to prepare faculty, community partners, and students for service-learning
- **Engagement:** Meaningful engagement with the community in a way that is of value, as indicated by community partner needs
- **Reflection and Connection:** Structured opportunities for students to think critically and make connections between their engagement in the community and course learning goals and objectives

iPERCED model Adapted from the [Service Learning Toolkit](#) of Michigan State University.

- **Evaluation:** Methods to determine the outcomes of the community engagement experience and students' learning
- **Demonstration/Celebration:** Strategies to share the results of community engagement as well as celebrating accomplishments with community partner, and other constituents

Embedment of a SE+ project within the curriculum as a Service-Learning module can be realized by adapting an existing course or building a new one. Service-Learning can be integrated in the curriculum in multiple ways; as a stand-alone module, an optional trajectory within a course, a transdisciplinary module;... The Educational Service or department can assist in making changes to the curriculum.

In case of difficulties due to the learning context to participate in a course, instead of following the course schedule; the student can cover the expected learning outcomes through volunteering experience by testing the theory in practice. This would be evaluated by a final paper or presentation.

Recognition process

The Lisbon Recognition Convention, which entered into force in 1999, provides a legal framework for cross-border academic recognition. The process of awarding credit to non-formal or informal learning has four main stages as described in the [ECTS Users's Guide](#):

1. Initial advice and guidance (what does the process involve for the learner, the credit limits for non-formal/informal learning; what are the costs, roles and responsibilities of learner and tutor/advisor; and different learning pathways to a qualification).
2. Support (reflective process; understanding learning outcomes; identifying own learning outcomes; evidence gathering and selection).
3. Recognition/assessment (assessment of evidence of achievement of learning outcomes and assessment criteria).
4. Award of credit (credit awarded through this process is of same value as credit gained through formal learning).

SocialErasmus+ at Universität Wien

In the Centre of Teacher Education at the University of Vienna, Austria, SocialErasmus was recognised as a course unit within a one of the courses of the Master programme “Teacher Training Programme - Basics of Educational Sciences”.

The SocialErasmus+ program reflects the content and eligible aims of the curriculum point “Expanding Social and Personal Competencies and Reflective Practice (6 ECTS), the SocialErasmus+ activities were consolidated under the course unit Social and Personal Competencies (2 ECTS). The course would be added to the Learning Agreement of the students with full recognition of the ECTS.

Each student participating in the course unit would have to take part in a minimum of 30 hours of voluntary work in schools and take part in 10-20 hours of homework and participation in preparation and evaluation sessions organised by the Coordinator, M.A. Goldberger.

SE+ as Internship

When an internship is part of the curriculum, it could be considered to include SocialErasmus+ activities as an internship activity. Depending on the number of credits and the intensity of the activity it could either be considered as a full internship for ECTS credits or be considered as part of a course unit where an internship experience could be embedded to connect theory with practise.

In a mixed classroom for local and international students, it allows to organize SocialErasmus+ activities for international students and other activities for local students.

The Implementation and recognition process can be followed similar to what was described under Service Learning.

The intake process, debriefing and assessment for SocialErasmus+ activities as an internship will have to be carried out jointly by the students, the academics and the hosting schools.

At the start of the activity an intake meeting between the student, school and/or the academic involved is recommended. Reflection (eg. in a final report paper or a presentation) should be an essential part of the assessment and debriefing process at the end of the activity to determine the learning outcomes of the student.

For internship activities, it is strongly recommended to respect the quality internship charter developed by the European Youth Forum (<http://qualityinternships.eu/>).

Benefits

- easier to implement in the curriculum than Service-learning: a little more flexibility
- Allows it to remain optional: not everyone in the classroom can carry out exactly the same internship

Challenges

- reflection and evaluation could be less elaborated than in a Service-Learning module
- Intrinsic motivation could be biased (eg. When not an optional course)

SE+ as additional course unit

If embedding SocialErasmus or Service Learning Courses directly in the curricula as a course or a course unit, it is possible to offer it as an Additional Education Unit. The Additional Education unit is an elective course that a student can take in order to have a recognized option as part of their university degree. It is intended to provide complementary, interdisciplinary lessons to students (including sports, artistic, cultural, associative or inclusion activities).

The goal is to have this Additional Education Unit officially recognized with ECTS credits in the Learning Agreement in order for it to be considered part of the curriculum of the student. Recognition of the Additional Education Unit can be done as an elective and be part of the 60 ECTS/academic year which is still the preferred option.

However, if this is not possible within the current framework of the Learning Agreement and the Curricula of the student, it can also be considered as an Additional Education Unit within the recognition process. Credits obtained in an Additional Education Unit are therefore not included in the 60 ECTS/academic year. They are extra-curricular credits that can be mentioned on the diploma of the student.

In case of an exchange students, these credits would be mentioned on the Learning Agreement, without replacing credits from a course at the home HEI.

The Additional Education Unit as a concept follows a similar structure to the Community Service Learning defined in the previous chapters, and is defined by a quote of hours to be executed by the students over the course of a semester, and followed up by a teacher / professor to ensure Learning Objectives are met.

The exchange student can register for this course as an elective course. The course would be included in the Learning Agreement, without directly replacing it by a course at the home HEI. This supports the directive that courses do not have to find a direct match within the curriculum of the host institution but places the learning experience and reaching the learning objectives of the curricula as a central objective.

The home HEI can decide to fully recognize the course by including the ECTS connected to the entire degree of the student, increasing the full ECTS count of the degree at graduation and/or refer to it in paragraph 6 of the Diploma Supplement that covers additional information such as volunteering activities.



SocialErasmus in Besançon

Erasmus Student Network Besançon and the Université de Franche-Comté have established a collaboration on a good example of the Additional Education Unit to improve the social engagement of International Students. Each semester up to 50 International students select this optional course and will do SocialErasmus activities for a total of 25 hours. The course unit is coordinated by the M. Suchet, Project Manager of ESN Besançon under the supervision of Professor C. Bernadot Nicolet at the Center for Applied Linguistics of the Université de Franche-Comté, where the main focus of the course unit is to encourage international students to interact with locals and exercise their French language skills.

At the start of the project, the students are supported in the organisation by local volunteers of ESN Besançon, while they are expected to do finalise the course by implementing activities independently. At the end of the course, students have to do a final presentation and receive a certificate worth 3 ECTS. In the period of 2016 to 2018, more than 150 activities took place, organised by more than 100 students, reaching out to more than 25 local schools and youth organisations and around 1000 locals were reached.

Benefits

- easier to implement in the curriculum than Service-learning: a little more flexibility
- Allows it to remain optional: not everyone in the classroom can carry out exactly the same internship

Challenges

- reflection and evaluation could be less elaborated than in a Service-Learning module
- Intrinsic motivation could be biased (eg. When not an optional course)

SocialErasmus as an Extracurricular Activity

SocialErasmus+ is an activity that encourages student-volunteering. While there are a number of advantages to include it in the curriculum as mentioned above, it could also be a deliberate choice to offer SocialErasmus+ activities outside the curriculum. International Students chose the activity because they are genuinely interested in the integration in the local community and the informal learning process. However, in extra-curricular activities it is positive and encouraging to foresee a form of recognition to validate the activity. It could increase the motivation and encourage a reflection process on the activity.

Diploma Supplement

"The Diploma Supplement (DS) is a document accompanying a higher education diploma, providing a standardised description of the nature, level, context, content and status of the studies completed by its holder. It is produced by the higher education institutions according to standards agreed by the European Commission, the Council of Europe and UNESCO. The Diploma Supplement is also part of the Europass framework transparency tools.

The supplement is designed as an aid to help (but not guarantee) recognition – it is not a CV or a substitute for the original qualification." (http://ec.europa.eu/education/resources/diploma-supplement_en)

Section 6 'Additional Information' in the Diploma Supplement template allows the HEI's to add additional information. In some countries (eg. France and Germany) this section is used to mention extracurricular activities and the knowledge, skills and attitudes acquired by the student throughout their studies. However, in other countries (eg. Belgium and UK) this section is not used to mention extracurricular activities. In these countries section 6 is used to specify why the student had an adapted curriculum (eg. exemptions for some courses due to a previously obtained diploma).

A further unification or generalization of the Diploma Supplement could be recommended. When an Additional Educational Unit is included on the Learning Agreement of an exchange student, it will be recognized on the Diploma Supplement in some countries, while in other it won't.



Badges

Open Digital Badges is a method to validate and recognise non-formal learning where a badge is allocated to a set of competences and attitudes.

Open Badges is an open source system based on the Mozilla framework (See also: European Badge Alliance at ebawebsite.net).

This system allows to link key competencies and skills to the volunteering/mobility experience, while helping the beneficiary identify the learning process they went through.

HEIs working with Badge Systems could consider SocialErasmus+ activities on the checklist of a badge that recognizes volunteering skills or work out a badge system specifically for SocialErasmus activities.



Certificates

An official document that certifies the volunteer efforts of the students to validate the SocialErasmus+ activities participated in by the student.

The certificate should be offered by the coordinator or academic at the hosting HEI that validates the SocialErasmus+ activities participated in by the student.

A certificate can include a number of (extra-curricular) ECTS and can be given in addition to the curricular recognition.

There is no quality assurance process for assigning credits to a certificate. It is therefore recommended to include additional information on the activity and the assessment process. This increases the value of the certificate and facilitates the possible recognition of the credits at the home HEI.



Youthpass

The Youthpass is a European wide instrument to document and recognize learning through non-formal education. It's a template offered by Youth in Action for Youth initiatives supported by the Erasmus+ Project.

The Youthpass supports the reflection process on the learning experience of the student and is therefore a personal process the participant of an activity takes part in. Emphasis should be put on implementing the right skills, knowledge and attitude.

Higher Education Institutions function as coordinator of the certificate and would need to set up the assessment environment for the participating students.

For more information, please visit youthpass.eu



LinkedIn Endorsements

The coordinator of the SocialErasmus activities can give recognition for the skills showcased by the student by offering LinkedIn endorsements.

LinkedIn provides an easy and clear structure on how to endorse skills, so it would be easy to implement.

Support by academics or coordinators working on topics in the field, showcases the student's willingness to contribute to society as an active citizen and proves the student has acquired practical skills next to the knowledge provided by the University.

On LinkedIn profiles this information can be made directly available to future employers.

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**“
Education is the
most powerful
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can use to change
the world.”**

*Nelson
Mandela*

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