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MAPPING LOCAL CERL PRACTICES WITHIN
PARTNER INSTITUTIONS

CONCLUSIONS

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Introduction

The CIRCLET - Curriculum Innovation through Research with Communities: Learning circles of Educators and Technology - project unites the skills and experiences of five universities to support academic staff to embed community engaged research and learning (CERL) in their modules, enhanced by educational technology. The project is based on learning circles of academic staff who will be given support to redesign their courses and will work with and learn from each other. In order to shape those learning circles and to make initial contact with educators who are interested in or have already started CERL projects within their courses, CIRCLET has taken off with a scoping and mapping exercise. Through a course scan and local consultations, partners have produced an overview of existing community collaborations within their institution and contact details of lecturers and researchers who are already collaborating with local community partners within their courses or are interested in starting to do this.

During the project kick-off meeting in October 2019, the consortium decided that every partner could choose his/her own mapping method in order to adapt to different institutional structures, ways of work, availability and focus of the consortium partner institutions. In this report the results of the local mapping exercises are summarized.

This accessible summary of a confidential, internal report is publicly available on the project website www.circlet.eu and will be actively disseminated, to make existing community collaborations visible and open new opportunities of (inter)disciplinary teaching and research.

Conclusions

Despite all institutional differences and approaches, five broad / general conclusions and following recommendations and guidelines for the development of the learning circles (IO3) and online module (IO4) can be drafted from the institutional reports. In general, we concluded that good dissemination resources for the call for participants are required.

1) VALUABLE FOR STUDENTS

Most lecturers interested in CERL mentioned the value of real life projects and experiences for their students, highlighting the opportunity they offer to develop relevant competences.

- ➔ Tap into list of motivators for CERL in the call for applications and in the module/learning circle content:
 - Value of applying learning, real-world experience
 - Student learning and skill development
 - Relevance of CERL to their discipline/module
 - Link to prior experience of working in/with charities/communities
 - Mutual benefit for participants
 - Supporting access to higher education for non-traditional students

2) STRATEGIC BENEFITS

Several institutions realize the strategic benefits of CERL, fulfilling the third pillar of higher education but also intensifying their links with the local environment/city.

- ➔ Tap into list of motivators for CERL in the call for applications and in the learning circle/module content:
 - Connecting your teaching to your public and civic engagement;
 - Supporting community organisations through your teaching practice;
 - Contributing to your Institutional Strategy

3) TIME CONSTRAINTS

In every institution lack of time is mentioned as a barrier to developing CERL. All lecturers and researchers are busy and would need additional staff support to perform CERL in a qualitative way.

- ➔ Include guidance on time commitments in call with draft deadlines for learning circles/CPD module next academic year
- ➔ Module timing: Friday lunchtimes
- ➔ Explore the possibility of participants joining LC sessions virtually
- ➔ In order to find times for the LCs, set a time for the first one and then ask people to get their diaries out and schedule the rest
- ➔ LC and online module to include content on managing time, relationships, expectations.

4) SCIENCE SHOP SUPPORT

Overarching co-ordination and administrative support - e.g. through a Science Shop – is brought to the forefront as being a welcome support, to identify interesting and interested CSOs, collect topics and support collaborations with CSOs. Proving case studies, good practices and inspirational examples should be a substantial part of this support.

- ➔ Make clear in the call documents that in the learning circle and online CPD module participants will get
 - resources (readings, experts, peer support)
 - Skill/competency development - including conflict resolution, constructive feedback etc
 - logistical and pedagogical support

5) RECOGNITION/BUDGET

Lecturers also mention the need for additional financial resources. Mostly for rewarding CERL activities but also for realizing more ambitious CERL projects.

- ➔ Sell the module as a stand-alone professional development module, as well as a pipeline for further study
- ➔ Explore local level solutions for recognition e.g. staff recognition for Engagement Award or HEA fellowship
- ➔ Explore the possibility of Digital Badges, could be international - valuing the European element
- ➔ Offer funding to academics as an 'implementation fund'
- ➔ Explore offering awards/incentives at the end of the module/LC, on successful completion
- ➔ Explore using project's (E+) PMI budget to cover incentives – e.g. pay for conference registration
- ➔ Ask Heads of Schools to circulate application docs to lecturers
- ➔ Ask for endorsement by the HEI President/Vice Chancellor