D5.1.7 Individual social engagement plan for University of Niš

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1. Introduction

1.1 About the project

ERASMUS+ project entitled "*Institutional framework for development of the third mission of universities in Serbia*" with acronym IF4TM is intended to enable development of the third mission or third dimension at higher education institutions (HEIs) from Republic of Serbia, members of the project consortium. Workpackage 5 (WP5) „*Social engagement dimension*", within this project, is focused on social engagement dimension, social involvement and responsibility, as well as closer interaction of universities with wider community. The aim of activity 5.1 "Defining universities' social engagement plans" is to suggest guidelines and recommendations for development of individual social engagement plans for Serbian HEIs.

1.2 Missions of modern universities

From their establishment, universities have been the centers of education and research. These two fields are known as *first* and *second* mission of universities or HEIs, respectively. Two missions have been naturally grown, bearing in mind that HEIs represent the extraordinary concentration of human resources, but also impressive infrastructural resources such as libraries, laboratories, sports facilities, etc., which should be open for wider community. Consequently, in recent period universities have adapted and articulated its role in the social, cultural and economic development of the wider society [1] and have tried to improve the visibility of university activities focused on services to society and industry. This is called the "*Third mission*" of universities - activity that is a vitally important component of any university's role. The "third mission" is not a separate mission, but it is more synergically connected with two others in order to improve HEIs' contribution to society (Figure 1).
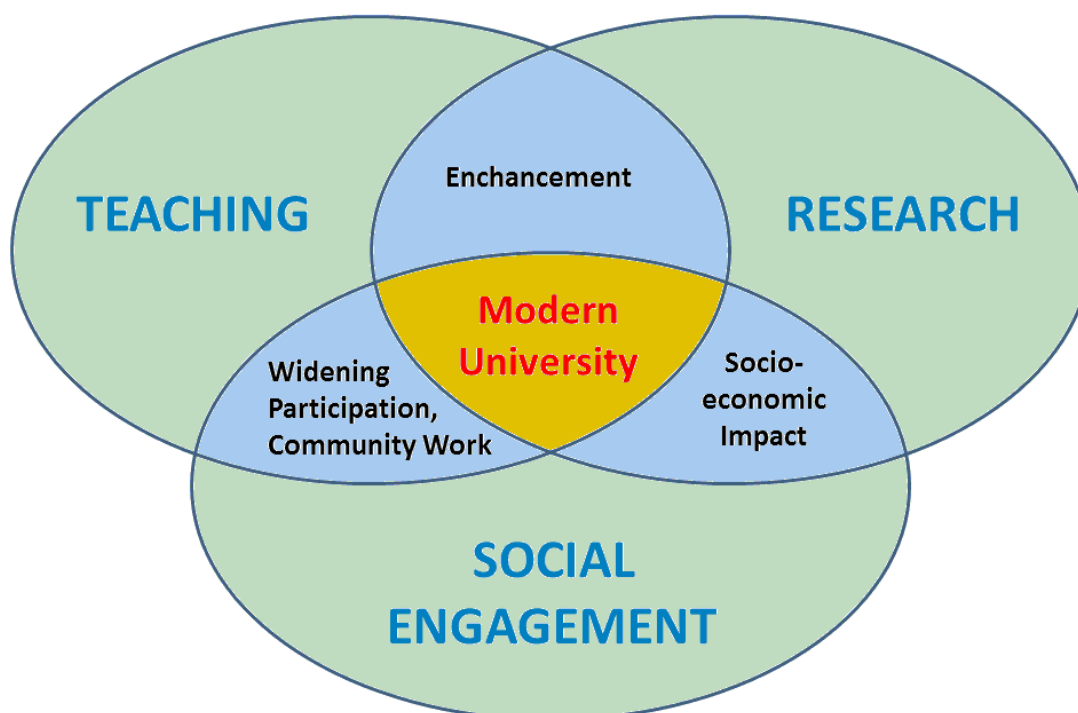

Figure 1. Interrelation of three missions of HEIs

This "Third mission" can be classified/summarized into following activities:

a) engaged research (technology transfer and innovation, etc.);
b) engaged education (lifelong learning, continuing education, public training, etc.) enabling studying to vulnerable groups, creation of the open society and support to the cultural diversity and broader horizons through participation in mobility schemes,
c) social engagement (public access lectures or concerts, initiating public debates on important social issues, voluntary work and consultancy by university staff and/or students, etc.).

This approach considers a university as a social organism which is connected in many ways with wider social ecosystems of its city and its region (Figure 2), as well as nation state and for some universities, other national communities and supra-national institutions [1]. Universities are expected to assume a more active role in regional and national economic development while facing competition from other public and private higher education and research institutions [2]. As economies are becoming increasingly knowledge-based, great expectations have been established for universities as drivers for knowledge, value creation [3] and shaping innovation system, especially at regional level. Additionally, the social impact of higher education is also high on the European agenda because the European Commission expects higher education to support societal development through continuing education [4].
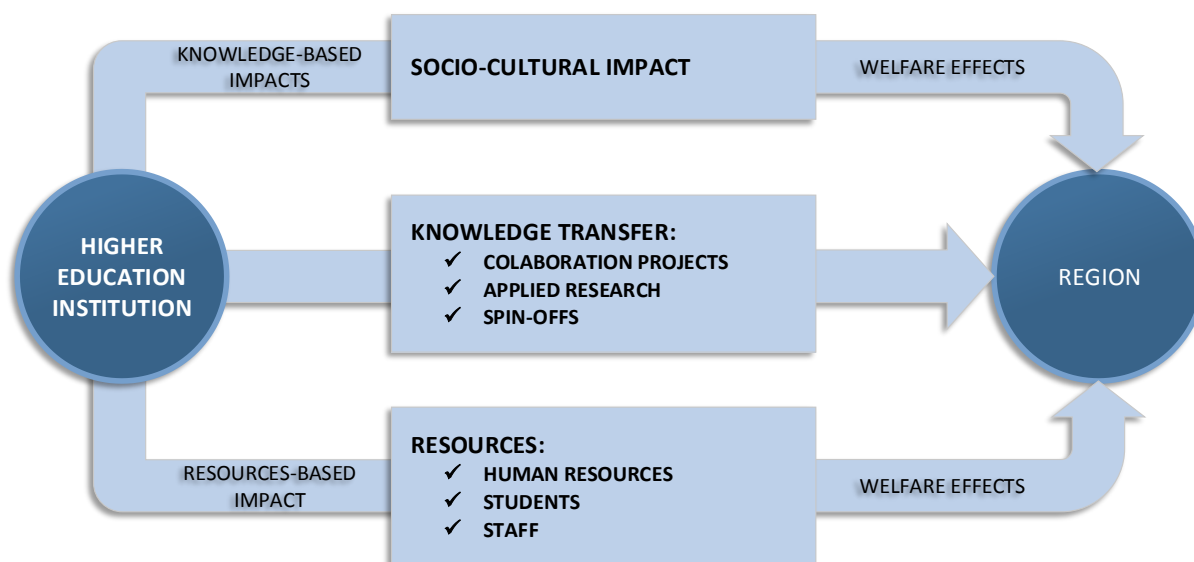

Figure 2. Regional effects from higher education institutions

2. Engaged research

Under definition [1] *Community engaged research* is a collaborative process between the researcher and community partner that creates and disseminates knowledge and creative expression with the goal of contributing to the discipline and strengthening the well-being of

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[1] http://www.community.vcu.edu/faculty-support-/cenr-support-at-vcu/what-is-community-engaged-research/

the community. It identifies the assets of all stakeholders and incorporates them in the design and conduct of the different phases of the research process.

Some of benefits of Community engaged research that can be recognized are

- better promotion of research and translation of findings,
- development of research that is responsive to community need,
- increased capacity built through partnerships,
- expanded funding opportunities and greater opportunities to translate findings into practice, etc.

Generally speaking, most activities at the University of Niš[2] dealing with research usually formally organized in the framework of some institutional projects. Fortunately, the research organizes more and more not for the science sake only, but for the society sake, too. This means that from experiments and research conducted at the University (usually at its faculties' labs) ordinary people (or tax payers) should have benefits as well as societal challenges need to be solved. Therefore, University of Niš is trying to promote collaborative development projects that link the university with communities to share knowledge and to encourage the use of knowledge held within the university, for social progress. Nowadays, more than ever, there is a necessity to engage universities and their faculties to interact with the rest of society and to promote the social impact of their research findings. The University makes technology transfer in a commercially responsible way, but taking into account possibilities and options to serve society, and to encourage solving problems of wider population. This is especially true for applied research that has to be more adapted towards social needs. In order to reach this aim, it is necessary to present research topics from the University and its faculties to ordinary people through popular manifestations such as science festivals, researchers' nights, University/faculties open days, etc. All those and similar events are excellent opportunities to fulfill this goal (Table 1).

In general, these events can normally gather more than thousands of primarily young people (which can represents a form of additional education), and can be a good opportunity for professors and researchers and particularly for students for their personal development through volunteering. Even more, constant collaboration between academic and media representatives fosters better education of public in general. University and its faculties have already opened or considering opening positions for PR experts who will write scientific news in the ways appropriate for public, which corroborate their responsible role in the society.

Important component of engaged research is transferring technology and innovation to useful products and services on the market as well as fostering the links between academic sector and industrial sector. Various entities established at the University of Niš, for example its Innovation center and Center for technology transfer can contribute significantly to further develop of this component. In this context, connection with social enterprises is especially important as well as making links between students and their future employers (for example through scholarship or student's practical placements, etc.).

An important bridge in the connection of academic sector and industrial sector can be publically accessible database of expertise performed at the University of Niš, in the form of business support offices web site. Such database will be developed within University's Innovation center soon. Moreover, freely available (or under licenses) electronic library of

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[2] https://www.ni.ac.rs/en/

PhD dissertations (the Digital Repository of the University Niš, founded and maintained by the University Library "Nikola Tesla"[3]) serves as the important and unique database for business professionals.

University of Niš try be a driver for promoting and establishing contacts and more importantly contracts with industry (which is not a simple task due to very difficult economic situation in Niš and its region) or with public bodies as well as establishing new spin-off and start-up, shaping all regional eco-system (even work places market). General intention of the University and most of its faculties is to fit teaching contents and methods to regional industry needs. It obviously will increase chances of graduates in accomplishing their career entry into the regional labor. Furthermore, a good fit between educational fields at the University and regional economy might simplify part-time work and internships of students in regional companies, final theses that are written for and supported by local firms, and study projects that are organized cooperatively by academic and private industry staff [5]. Accordingly, textbooks should include examples from the local economy, explaining the local constellation of the factors and ways of operating within domestic system. Certain faculties of the University of Niš (for example Faculty of Electronic Engineering, Faculty of Mechanical Engineering, Faculty of Technology and Faculty of Occupational Safety) have made significant breakthrough in this field, organizing also sponsored case study challenges, meet-ups, etc. In this context, intellectual property rights issue should be pay a special attention. University of Niš surely has a higher positive impact on society at large if it is connected closely with business incubators and science parks [6].

The surrounding region of the City of Niš[4] may profit from the spill-over effect of the distinguished research efforts of the University, their high public investments for research projects in future-oriented branches, and their international network connections which enable contacts with global knowledge flows for regional industry [5].

One of the components in EU funded projects (Horizon 2020, ERASMUS+, COST, EUREKA, IPA, etc.) is networking together with organization of events such as conferences, summer schools, workshops, seminars, etc. These events are a good opportunity that cities where HEIs are located can be visited by other researchers, professors, managers, entrepreneurial, etc. and to have some excursions which can further develop touristic, transportation or other sectors at regional level – this is interesting examples how HEIs can have influence on local or regional society, indirectly. The University of Niš is applying such approach as a very useful.

University of Niš trying to be key partner for regional authorities in formulating and implementing its strategies or programmes, and the most important one Smart Specialization Strategy (S3).

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[3] http://www.ubnt.ni.ac.rs/english

[4] http://www.ni.rs/

Table 1. Examples of engaged research or interesting events
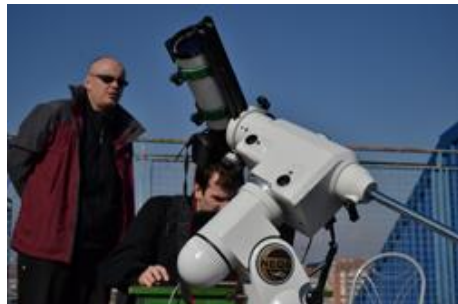
No.	Description	Illustrations
Collaborative engaged research projects		
1.	Prof. Dr. Vladan Vučković, 3-D Modeling and Simulation of the Original Patents of Nikola Tesla, Faculty of Electronic Engineering, University of Niš	
2.	World Water Day Water for Sustainable Development *The day for the water and the water for sustainable development* *(The Center of the City of Niš)*	
3.	In elementary school "Radoje Domanović" from Niš, associates of the Institute for Nature Protection held a thematic lecture and then answered many students' questions on the topic of water protection.	
4.	Promotion of paralympic sport goalball, a sport that is of particular importance for persons with demage to sight - organized by Faculty of Sport and Physical Education, University of Niš, in cooperation with the National sports association of blind and visually impaired persons, the Regional Association of blind of Serbia - Niš and the Special school for the boarding school "Bubanj" in Niš.	
Engaged research events		

1.	Festival of sciences	
2.	Festival "Nauk nije bauk" at Faculty of Electronic Engineering, University of Niš	
3.	The "Researchers' Night" in Niš More than 150 young scientists from 17 pm to midnight at multiple locations in the Fortress "Tvrdjava" prepared for citizens a fun exploratory adventure.	
4.	Student support center in the Week of students of the University of Niš.	

5.	The former, current and future colleagues and interns, friends from different IT organizations, representatives of faculties and student organizations from ETF, MatF, FON from University of Belgradein Belgrade and from Faculty of Electronic Engineering, University of Niš.	
6.	The two-day event "*Info-days*" at the Faculty of Electronic Engineering, University of Niš. Participants: 13 faculties, French Cultural Center, Student Cultural Center, American Corner, Department of Education, the Association of European Students of Technology BEST, Program "Run for the future," Career Development Center and the Foundation "Sveta Petka", etc.	
7.	Astronomical Society "Alfa" and Department of Physics at Faculty of Sciences and Mathematics, University of Niš organized a very successful observation of the partial solar eclipse, which was directly followed by over one hundred thousand people from the city's fortress and from the roof of the Faculty.	

3. Engaged education/teaching

Engaged education/teaching and learning address community labor market needs as well as helping students to become knowledgeable and active citizens of their city, their region, their nation and the globalized world [7]. In other words, HEIs should educate and build graduates who are well suited to participate in professional life, and are aware of their social context [1]. In modern society, where industrial sector suffers from losses caused by economic crises, many people lose their job. Unfortunately, this situation is also present in the City of Niš.

In addition to this, we are witness of dramatically changes in technology (e.g. in Electronic industry), thus knowledge we have learnt during our study are usually out of date now. Consequently, University of Niš and its faculties should be ready to follow these needs and to provide flexible study programmes in the context of lifelong-learning, continuing education, distance learning, etc. to fulfill various demands for changing qualifications and expertise during the working career. In this way, the University can help to social ecosystem in the city, region, country, etc. The continuing education activities are targeted at students, specialists or technicians who are working in different fields of science, teachers, tourism brokers, university administrative personnel and public sector staff.

Some examples of the programmes which can be offered could be, for example accountancy, secretary and archivist, family tourism management, writing and journalism, programming and information technology expert, etc. [8]. Recognizing above-mentioned role, many universities already run a wide range of programmes and events such as

- work-based and experiential learning;
- programmes aimed at extending educational access to targeted disadvantaged groups;
- programmes aimed at engaging university members and local residents in informed debate about matters of common and current interest;
- public lectures, etc.

It should be noted here that Lifelong Learning Center at the University of Niš in accordance with the plan of activities of TEMPUS project IPROD (*Improvement of Product Development Studies in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina*) provides the courses of continuing education:

- Innovation management
- Structural analysis
- Rapid prototyping.
- Industrial Product Development

to all interested parties.

It must be emphasized that representatives of local communities, enterprises, NGOs, etc. should be unconditionally incorporated in the development of curricula and the delivery of learning and teaching [9]. It is of the crucial importance to develop and encourage inter-disciplinary (multi-disciplinary) studies at all levels of education, so to promote collaboration among various faculties, coming from different scientific disciplines and equip the students with the set of skills and knowledge necessary for the modern work.

In that sense, the University of Niš established Center for multidisciplinary study which is organizational unit responsible for implementation and realization of different accredited master study programs.

Recently accredited and realized is the multidisciplinary master study program *Multimedia Technologies* (accredited on September, 2010) at the University of Niš for education of graduated engineers in the field of multimedia technologies. Engineers, who should graduate on this program, gain superior knowledge in the field of multimedia technologies that are required for further development of the overall society. There is a clear social need for education of engineers of such profile with specific skills and competencies in the scope of multimedia content creation, leading production process of audio and video programs, as well as the efficient transfer of information. Achievement and implementation of the existing standards in exploitation and design of modern multimedia systems, as well as the application of computer and audio-visual equipment in the program creation, are not possible without staff who have clearly defined set of skills and knowledge in this field.

The purpose of the study program *Multimedia Technologies* is very interesting. Namely, the purpose is education of students who will be employed in many sectors of the economy and who will apply their knowledge in the following areas:

- design and implementation of audio equipment;
- design and implementation of video equipment;
- management of program creation in TV studios (technical leadership);
- checking the technical quality of produced programs upon the standards for recording and transmission;
- leadership in creating radio programs and radio stations on the Internet;
- design and maintenance of multimedia communication systems;
- providing conditions for achieving QoS for data transmission in multimedia networks;
- design of multimedia information systems;
- creation of dynamic web content and interactive web applications;
- electronic publishing;
- production of animated programs;
- maintenance and management of multimedia databases;
- testing and maintenance of multimedia equipment and systems;
- radio and TV journalism;
- intercultural communication.

The aim of the study program *Multimedia Technologies* is to train students in practical application of multimedia systems, computer, audio and video, communication and measuring information equipment. The final goal is also training for design and implementation of multimedia systems and equipment for studio and independent production of programs and multimedia content according to existing standards. Students get acquainted with modern methods for creating multimedia presentations, needs to maintain high quality produced information, quality and fast transfer of multimedia information.

Important aspects in the context of engaged learning is that the University of Niš is working on a platform with open access of teaching materials (open sciences concept) such as textbooks (university textbooks, extra university textbooks, instruction for exercises), scientific papers, electronic books, etc. This platform with in advance defined procedures and guidelines for publishing OER[5] will be based on BAEKTEL[6] platform[7]. The most important task will be to produce course materials in various languages (at least in english), both in video and audio format and in written form as parallel (multilingual) corpora of lessons and

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[5] Open Educational Resources
[6] BAEKTEL: Blending academic and entrepreneurial knowledge in technology enhanced learning (Tempus Project No. 544482-TEMPUS-1-2013-1-IT-TEMPUS-JPHES)
[7] http://www.baektel.eu/?menu=objectives

texts, supported by electronic terminological resources, services, and functionalities for searching and browsing of terminological resources and using them for text annotation.

Students can be engaged for example to deliver practical exercises of sport activities (Table 2) in order to promote healthy life in general or to help/support the socially or physically challenged people. Furthermore, professor and students can be engaged to give a blood on volunteering base for blood reserve in hospitals in order to help and save lives of other people. Keeping in mind that many HEIs have already done and put a lot of efforts in volunteering activities (e.g. law clinic, asylum for animals, research of public opinion on social topic, etc.), it is important to create mechanism to formalize these initiatives and furtherly promote them in the public. In that sense, the University of Niš established Student Support Center[8] that provides support to students from unrepresented groups, as well as counseling and gives psycho-social support.

The University of Niš can also provide students engagement into international institutions through the *Center for international relations* that prepares the necessary decisions and the accompanying documentation needed for the University participation in international projects and other forms of international collaboration, as well as establishes contacts with universities and other institutions on the international level, but also giving students opportunities to develop their careers and to have awareness of their role into local society. The University units for that purposes are
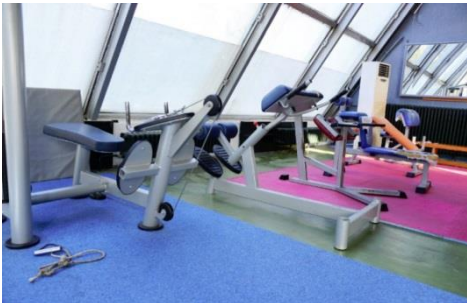
- *Center for career development* that gathers and puts information on web site on the possibilities of studying at the University, organizes meetings with potential employers and students, as well as makes contacts with the competent employment services;
- *Interface center* that develops methodologies and tools for the knowledge transfer enhancement, as well as develops measures for the improvement of higher education in accordance with current demands of the labor market and society.

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[8] https://ni.ac.rs/en/university/university-centers

Table 2. Examples of engaged education

No.	Description	Illustrations
1.	Student Association and youth physical activity in cooperation with the Ministry of Youth and Sports of the Republic of Serbia enabled students and young people from Niš completely free sports activities in the sport center Čair: to practice in the gym, or to relax on at the yoga classes,.	
2.	Summer blood donation, which is held every year in the open air in the center of Vranje.	
3.	Lecture "The world around us at different wavelengths"	
4.	Seminar on "Digital Violence" Workshops: Internet and digital communication and its specifics; Forms of neglect, violence, abuse and exploitation of children via the Internet, etc.	
5.	International Conference: " Life-long learning of teachers'	

4. Social engagement

Social engagement is usually related to links and activities of mutual benefit for both university members and communities within its home city, region and country. We use the word external communities to cover all levels of human organization outside the university itself, such as business, industry, schools, governments, non-governmental organizations, associations, indigenous and ethnic communities, and the general public [9]. Community engagement is one of the main responsibilities of HEIs. Nowadays, engaged universities are essential for economic and social future of each country. Thus HEIs should align their strengths into community contexts, engaging them in the cultural and economic development of their host societies.

In that sense, the University of Niš is permanently trying to develop long term partnerships with its neighborhood such as local schools, colleges, firms, NGOs, etc. At the same time the University of Niš is opening their facilities (in some time slots) such as libraries (both the University library "Nikola Tesla", as well as faculties' libraries), computer facilities, amphitheaters, etc. for interested parties from local or regional community.

It should be noted that the University of Niš takes a very active part in the cultural development of the local society (Table 3), which is the practice that should be kept at the same level in the following period.

The University Library "Nikola Tesla" as a member of University organizes also significant number of culture events such as exhibitions, concerts, literary events and many others.

Table 3. Examples of cultural engagement

No.	Description	Illustrations
1.	With the aim to build and improve academic, civil and human values, University of Niš organizes every year Charity Ball (Svetosavski bal) under the slogan "*This is an opportunity to be unique in the nobility*".	

2.	The annual event "Japanese" - an exhibition of books and writings, graphics, japanese martial weapons and equipment, short films about Japan (organized by the University Library)	
3.	Literary evening dedicated to the Japanese writer Yukio Mishima (organized by the University Library).	
4.	Fascinating presentation of the project "Albanian Golgotha: 100 years later" (organized by the University Library).	
5.	Professors of the Faculty of Arts, University of Nis Vesna Rilak Stanimirović, viola performer and pianist Hristina Vuković Jovanović, held a concert at the Embassy of the Republic of Serbia in Brussels.	

Table 4. A developmental model of modes of university/society engagement with external communities [10]

Mode of engagement	Objective of engagement	HEIs aim	Typical examples
1. Providing information	Informing society of university's plans, projects, opportunities and problems	Providing a positive image for HEin society, and being open about activities	News bulletins, press releases, commentaries, media announcements
2. Public relations	Providing information; developing community rapport; shared events	Achieve acceptance of university as active social partner	University representatives in cultural and arts groups; informal discussions
3. Dissemination of academic findings	Dissemination of university knowledge base in teaching & research	Shape public opinion, build and strengthen a critical learning society	Conferences, round-tables, congresses, symposia, seminars, exhibitions
4. University as a cultural influence	Improve academic thinking & discussions with critical societal perspectives	Promote reflexive attitudes in community and desire to evolve	Capacity-building courses, technical assistance, advisory services, free chair
5. Critical engagement	Enriching societal developmented back in to university practices	Forming a transformatory societal coalition based on reflective principles	Participatory social change in social/economic/environmental fields

Five sophistication levels for university social engagement are shown in Table 4 [10].

The core of the social engagement activities is (or should be) volunteering. For example, HEIs representatives can provide:

- social consultancy – using expertise to solve problems pro bono (for example through law shops);
- educational outreach - running the more informal kind of learning programmes (for example summer camps for pupils);
- services and facilities – putting resources to work for society (Table 5).

Universities should develop joint actions for benefits of society, in which professors and students can participate together. For example, they can: paint together some buildings, collect financial or material help for poor people or children without parents, provide classes for pupils and disabled people, etc. It will be very useful to start organizing a two-day conference within the HEIs to bring together those involved in social engagement [9] to share knowledge and to adopt measures for increasing this dimension of the universities activities. This event as well as other ones should strongly promote corporate social responsibility [11] and to act to reduce/stop corruption, criminality and violence (at all levels – among pupils, in the family, at working place, etc.). It is important to note that there are different styles and

different levels of social engagement. One should not just focus on institutional connections; there is also personal engagement into communities. What ever a university's approach, there will always be staff and students who get involved in their locality (for example, computer science students can design a web site for a local charity; students can provide mentoring or sports coaching in local schools, students can organize fund-raising actions for people on low incomes, for homeless people or for disabled people, etc.). Some of that involvement will be with disadvantaged and marginalized communities. Those connections are often individual commitments - people volunteering with third sector organizations or getting involved in local 'causes'. The presence of a university can thus be a resource impacting on a locality in positive ways [10].

Table 5. Examples of social engagement:

No.	Description	Illustrations
1.	Access to the University Library "Nikola tesla"	
2.	Access to faculties facilities (Faculty of Medcine, University of Niš)	
3.	World Environment Day, EcoPolis Network City Municipality Niš-Palilula Common Action "Clean Serbia"	

5. Measuring "third mission" - Indicators

In terms of their "Third mission" performance, it is necessary that the University of Niš adopts a set of measurable indicators, to monitor its success in this context. A list of indicators should respect specificity of the University and wider eco-system in which the University works. Some indicators which can be implemented are shown in Table 6.

Table 6. The list of possible indicators for measuring of "Third mission" progress or success

No.	Type	Indicators
1.	Engaged research	No. of projects for the benefits of wider society
		No. of people covered/influenced by these projects
		No. of HEIs' contracts with industry
		No. of HEIs' contracts with public bodies
		No. of participants on Festival of sciences
		No. of participants on Researchers' nights
		No. of participants on Open door days
2.	Engaged education	No. of people who used HEIs facilities/resources
		No. of round tables organized and No. of people participated
		No. of people participated in lifelong learning courses
		No. of students practical placement
		Number of pro-bono classes outside of HEIs
3.	Social engagement	No. of people outside of HEIs who used libraries space/services
		No. of participants outside of HEIs who used facilities for organization of conferences, meetings, events, etc.
		No. of students/professors volunteering for benefits of wider community
		Initiating public debates on important social issues

Besides these quantitative indicators, qualitative indicators are very much important as well. These could include

- satisfaction of the target groups (business community, journalists, NGOs, etc., investigated in polls);
- tradition of certain good practices (e.g. whether some events are organized in constant time periods);
- tone of the media articles on certain matter (positive, negative, taking into account experts' opinion or not, etc.), etc.

6. Recommendations

Successful "third mission" development requires mutual trust and commitment between the University and its faculties from one side, and local/regional/national authorities, enterprises and the community in general, on the other side. In that sense, set of recommendations for successful implementation of the "Third mission" at the University of Niš can be as follow:

- "Third mission" should be clearly introduced in the University's Mission statement;
- University should be the main promoter of the third mission;
- University Council may appoint Vice-Rector for Third mission or Vice-Rector for Social engagement for relationship and services towards wider society;
- University should develop and adopt Social engagement strategy;
- University should promote engagement and linkage with society that are or should be included in its strategic documents;
- University should develop and adopt annual Social engagement action plan based on the Social engagement strategy;
- University should develop a set of social engagement indicators to monitor the rate of success of University's social engagement strategy;
- University should prepare, discuss and adopt annual Report on social engagement activities estimated taking into account established social engagement indicators;
- University should include participation in social engagement activities in the existed criteria for university staff promotion;
- University should include participation in social engagement activities as a special kind of student practice which will be valued as extra ECTS credits;
- University website should provide public information that promotes "Third mission" and volunteering work;
- University's annual reports and all social engagement activities must be transparent to wider community;
- University should promote the importance of collaborative development projects that link the university with community;
- University should attract Alumni to improve the interaction with the social and business regional environment.

7. Next steps

The next steps in the realization of the strategic planning of social engagement activities at the University of Niš will be as follow:

- To finalize the proposed Individual Social Engagement Plan (ISEP) for the University
- To discuss ISEP at the University and its faculties
- To introduce ISEP to the University Senate for adoption
- To appoint the University working team for elaboration of ISEP
- To start implementation of ISEP at the University and its faculties
- To monitor recommended social engagement indicators
- To discuss and adopt the University annually report on ISEP.

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