



European labour mobility-led Career and Service-Learning System in Higher Education

Toolkit Guidance for HEI Educators on Career Development through CSL Practices

Project Number: 2024-1-SI01-KA220-HED-000252281

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Co-funded by
the European Union

1

INTRODUCTION

Why employability matters in higher education



Graduate employability remains central to European higher education policy and institutional missions.



Higher education is increasingly expected to support a smooth transition from study to work.



Employability is broader than immediate job access; it includes the capacity to navigate complex and changing career pathways.



Students need discipline-specific expertise together with transferable and transversal skills.



This creates pressure on HEIs to connect academic excellence with real-world relevance.

INTRODUCTION

The gap CSL aims to address



Theory-focused models

Traditional pedagogical models often emphasize theoretical instruction.



Employer expectations

Employers and communities increasingly expect graduates to demonstrate practical, technical, and soft skills.



The mismatch

A mismatch can emerge between classroom learning and workplace application.



The CSL response

Career Service-Learning combines academic learning, work-based projects, community engagement, and reflection.

CHAPTER 1

1.1

Background and rationale



Technological change and globalization

The digital revolution has changed the skills required in the labour market.



Labour market alignment

Employers increasingly seek candidates with both domain-specific knowledge and transferable soft skills.



Social responsibility and active citizenship

Graduates are expected to contribute responsibly to sustainability, social justice, and community well-being.

1.1 BACKGROUND

Technological change and globalization



Digital transformation has redefined professional roles, work processes, and competence profiles.



Technical proficiency alone is not sufficient; graduates also need creativity, critical thinking, and adaptability.



CSL exposes students to authentic contexts where technologies, organizational needs, and social challenges intersect.



Through hands-on projects, students learn to apply academic concepts in dynamic and sometimes unpredictable settings.



This supports the development of flexible professionals prepared for global and digital workplaces.

1.1 BACKGROUND

Labour market alignment



Employers increasingly value transferable skills such as communication, teamwork, leadership, adaptability, and problem-solving.



Persistent skills gaps indicate that theoretical knowledge must be complemented by experiential learning.



CSL projects allow students to work with businesses, public institutions, NGOs, or community partners.



Students receive opportunities to test knowledge, receive feedback, and understand professional standards.



Educators can use CSL to make learning outcomes more relevant to labour market needs.

1.1 BACKGROUND

Social responsibility and policy reform



Contemporary higher education must prepare students not only for employment, but also for responsible citizenship.



CSL can embed sustainability, inclusion, and social responsibility into the learning process.



Policy reforms increasingly emphasize quality assurance, university governance, and stronger partnerships with industry and community actors.



These priorities create an institutional basis for CSL integration.



CSL helps curricula remain future-focused, socially relevant, and connected to external stakeholders.

CHAPTER 1

1.2

Purpose of the toolkit



Supports the integration of Career Service-Learning into higher education curricula.



Links academic knowledge with real-world professional experience.



Helps educators design learning activities that support career readiness and employability.



Encourages community engagement and contribution to societal needs.



Provides a structured approach so students, educators, institutions, and communities all benefit.

1.2 PURPOSE

Integrating experiential learning



Educators can embed real-world service projects directly into course assignments and learning activities.



Students apply theories and disciplinary concepts to authentic challenges faced by organizations or communities.



CSL helps bridge the gap between theoretical learning and practical application.



The toolkit can guide project selection, activity design, and alignment with learning outcomes.



The result is a stronger connection between course content, competence development, and external impact.

1.2 PURPOSE

Structured reflection for career development



Reflection helps students connect service experiences with academic learning and career goals.



Educators can use prompts, journals, guided discussions, and feedback sessions.



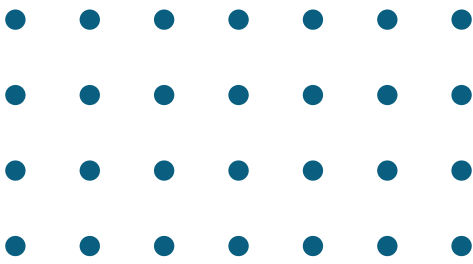
Students critically assess their strengths, weaknesses, professional interests, and areas for growth.



Structured reflection supports self-awareness, metacognition, and career decision-making.



It also helps students translate experience into evidence of competence.



Problem-solving and professional skills



CSL projects often involve complex, unstructured problems similar to those students may face in professional careers.



Students develop critical thinking, creativity, analytical reasoning, and solution design skills.



CSL also develops technical, discipline-specific abilities and transferable soft skills.



Relevant soft skills include communication, collaboration, adaptability, leadership, and project management.



Educators can assess students by looking at both learning processes and the practical value of proposed solutions.

1.2 PURPOSE

Networks, engagement, adaptability and career clarity



CSL creates opportunities for students to build professional relationships with organizations, businesses, and community actors.



The real-world relevance of CSL can increase student motivation, attendance, and commitment to learning.



Exposure to diverse work settings helps students develop flexibility, resilience, and resourcefulness.



Career exploration activities help students clarify professional interests and possible career paths.



These experiences strengthen students' ability to manage transitions into employment.

1.2 PURPOSE

Institutional and societal benefits



For institutions, CSL can strengthen community partnerships and enhance institutional reputation.



CSL can align teaching, employability strategies, and institutional engagement with local and regional development needs.



For society, CSL supports civic responsibility and prepares students to become socially responsible professionals.



Projects can address real-world issues such as sustainability, health, education, inclusion, and economic development.



CSL therefore combines academic value, career value, and public value.

1.3

Alignment with EU resolutions & CMS frameworks



CSL aligns with European objectives on skills development, lifelong learning, employability, and social inclusion.



It supports career preparedness by linking academic learning to authentic professional and community contexts.



It connects strongly with Career Management Skills frameworks for managing education, work, and career transitions.



EU alignment positions CSL as part of quality education, skills relevance, and workforce adaptability.



This alignment also supports recognition, transparency, and comparability of learning outcomes.

European Skills Agenda & European Year of Skills



Skills intelligence

CSL projects involve employers and reveal current skill needs and gaps.



Upskilling and reskilling

Hands-on learning helps students acquire new professional and transversal competences.



Partnership building

CSL naturally fosters cooperation between HEIs, employers, and community organizations.



Green and digital transitions

Projects can focus on sustainability and digital skills as strategic European priorities.

Career Management Skills framework



Self-awareness & personal development

Students reflect on strengths, weaknesses, aspirations, and professional identity.



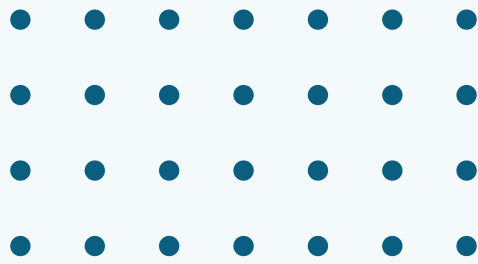
Career exploration & information management

Students gain insight into workplaces, industries, roles, and labour market information.



Decision-making & transition skills

Students practise problem-solving, teamwork, communication, and informed career decision-making.



Additional EU frameworks supported by CSL



Key Competences for Lifelong Learning

CSL develops personal, social, learning-to-learn, communication, entrepreneurial, and citizenship competences.



European Green Deal & Twin Transition

CSL can strengthen green skills, digital competence, and sustainable innovation.



European Education Area

CSL supports quality, inclusion, digital integration, and green transition in education.



European Pillar of Social Rights

CSL contributes to lifelong learning and active support for employment.

Quality assurance and recognition



Map CSL learning outcomes to CMS competences and ESCO skill descriptions.



Use European tools such as Europass and digital badges to document students' learning and experience.



Assess CSL learning outcomes with reference to EQF levels where appropriate.



Involve employers and community partners in defining relevant skill requirements.



Use feedback from students, faculty, and external partners for continuous improvement.

CHAPTER 1

1.4

Target audience

Educators



University and college educators across disciplines.

Career counsellors & student services



Career counsellors and student service professionals.

Policymakers & curriculum developers



Academic policymakers and curriculum developers, shaping a skilled, adaptable and socially responsible workforce.

1.4 TARGET AUDIENCE

Educators



Enhance student engagement by showing the real-world relevance of academic content.



Develop career-ready competencies, including technical, transversal, and soft skills.



Create opportunities for students to apply theory to authentic challenges.



Support interdisciplinary collaboration across faculties and fields of study.



Use structured reflection to help students develop self-awareness, professional identity, and career goals.

1.4 TARGET AUDIENCE

Career counsellors & student services



Support career exploration through hands-on experience in different professional roles and sectors.



Connect students with employers, mentors, community partners, and professional networks.



Build Career Management Skills such as self-awareness, career exploration, decision-making, and transition skills.

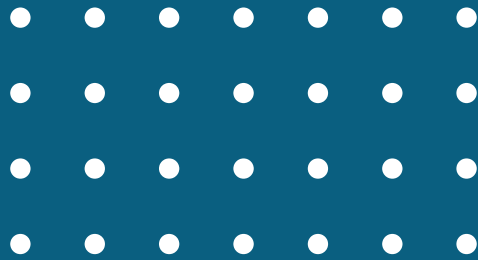


Help students recognize, develop, and communicate soft skills gained through CSL.



Provide continuous career support throughout the student journey, from entry to graduation.

Policymakers & curriculum developers



Align curricula with labour market needs and high-demand skill areas.



Promote lifelong learning through practical, competence-based experiences.



Create frameworks for collaboration among HEIs, companies, NGOs, public institutions, and local communities.



Improve graduate employability through real-world experience embedded in programmes.



Integrate career development into learning outcomes, course structures, assessment, and curriculum innovation.

Key message



CSL helps higher education respond to changing labour market demands and social expectations.



It supports employability by developing technical, transversal, reflective, and career management competences.



It aligns with major EU policy priorities on skills, lifelong learning, inclusion, green and digital transitions, and recognition of learning.



It offers practical value for educators, career services, policymakers, curriculum developers, students, institutions, and society.



The central design principle: combine theory, practice, reflection, partnership, and assessment.



THANK YOU

For exploring Career Service-Learning with ELIX



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