ANNEX 4 · TOOLKIT

Toolkit Guidance for HEI Educators on Career Development through CSL Practices

A practical guide for higher education teachers on integrating Career Service Learning into teaching, aligned with the Career Management Skills frameworks and EU policy.

PROJECT

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

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Contents

This CSL Toolkit serves as a practical guide for higher education teachers, equipping them with the tools, methodologies and best practices needed to integrate Career Service Learning into their teaching. By aligning with CMS frameworks and EU resolutions, it supports the development of lifelong career planning skills among students, fosters stronger university–industry partnerships and contributes to the enhancement of career education in higher education institutions.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 Background and rationale

1.2 Purpose of the toolkit

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1.4 Target audience

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Graduates' employability has been at the core of debates on higher education (HE) and its missions in HE systems throughout Europe (Sin and Neave, 2016).

It remains a priority for policymakers in many advanced western economies (Tomlinson, 2012) and extends the third mission to encompass HE's contribution to society (Arranz et al., 2022) and its relationship with the labour market, by providing useful skills for employers and ensuring a smooth transition for graduates. For various stakeholders, HE is responsible for fostering graduates' employability and even for providing ready-to-work graduates (Harvey, 2000), and this has become a source of considerable pressure on HE institutions.

Employability goes beyond the acquisition of skills or getting immediate access to a job. Graduates need transferable and transversal skills, in addition to more specific skills, to navigate the global world.

Modern higher education faces the dual challenge of advancing academic excellence while ensuring graduates possess the practical, soft and technical skills demanded by today's workforce. Traditional pedagogical models, which often emphasise theoretical instruction, risk creating a gap between classroom learning and workplace application.

> **Career Service Learning (CSL) offers a promising solution by integrating work-based projects, community engagement and reflective practice into academic curricula.**

1.1 Background and rationale

The rapidly evolving global landscape, characterised by technological disruption, globalisation and shifting workforce demands, requires HEIs to transform their traditional educational models. Several key drivers underscore the need for a more integrated CSL approach:

01

Technological change and globalisation

The digital revolution has redefined the skill sets needed in the workforce. As noted in resources such as the World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs Report (WEF, 2020) and MIT's research on digital transformation (MIT Sloan, 2021), graduates must combine technical proficiency with creativity, critical thinking and adaptability.

02

Labour market alignment

Research from platforms such as Harvard Business Review (HBR, 2019) shows that employers increasingly seek candidates with both domain-specific knowledge and transferable soft skills. Many reports indicate a persistent skills gap that can be addressed through hands-on, experiential learning.

03

Social responsibility and active citizenship

In an era of heightened awareness about sustainability and social justice, companies and communities expect graduates to be active, responsible citizens. Initiatives from organisations like the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC, 2020) stress the importance of embedding social responsibility into education.

04

Policy and reform initiatives

Reforms in the Slovak Republic, as outlined by the OECD (2021), emphasise enhanced university governance, quality assurance and stronger industry partnerships. These reforms provide an institutional basis for integrating CSL, ensuring that curricula remain relevant and future-focused.

Together, these factors create a compelling rationale for adopting a CSL model that bridges the gap between theory and practice, producing graduates who are not only knowledgeable but also capable of thriving in real-world settings.

1.2 Purpose of the toolkit

The Career Service Learning (CSL) approach provides a powerful framework for integrating academic knowledge with real-world professional experiences, focusing on career development and employability. It combines learning theory with hands-on community engagement, enabling educators to enhance students' career readiness while contributing to societal needs. The toolkit is designed to support the smooth integration of CSL into curricula, ensuring that both students and institutions benefit from this approach.

1 Integrating experiential learning into the curriculum

One of the most significant contributions of CSL is its ability to bridge the gap between theoretical learning and practical application. CSL emphasises experiential learning, where students engage in real-world service projects aligned with their academic studies.

PRACTICAL USE

Educators can use the toolkit to incorporate CSL experiences directly into their courses. This involves designing assignments or projects that require students to work with external community organisations or businesses, applying academic theories to solve real challenges.

BENEFIT FOR EDUCATORS

The toolkit helps instructors identify the right projects, design relevant academic content and facilitate reflective learning, ensuring that CSL activities are aligned with course objectives and learning outcomes.

2 Structured reflection to enhance career development

Reflection is at the core of CSL. Educators can use the toolkit to guide students through structured reflection exercises that connect their service-learning experiences with their academic learning and career development goals.

PRACTICAL USE

Educators can create reflection prompts, journaling exercises and guided discussions using the toolkit, allowing students to reflect critically on their experiences and assess their skill development.

BENEFIT FOR EDUCATORS

By promoting self-awareness and metacognitive skills, structured reflection helps students better understand their strengths, weaknesses and areas for career growth, ultimately improving their career decision-making.

3 Problem-solving and critical thinking development

CSL projects often involve working on authentic, real-world problems faced by community organisations or businesses. This helps students develop crucial problem-solving and critical thinking skills.

PRACTICAL USE

Educators can use the toolkit to design CSL activities that require students to address complex, unstructured problems that mimic the challenges they may face in their professional careers. Examples include creating marketing strategies for a local business or developing sustainability plans for community projects.

BENEFIT FOR EDUCATORS

CSL enhances students' ability to think critically and develop solutions to real-world problems. Educators can evaluate students based on their analytical skills, creativity and the practical impact of their solutions.

4 Professional skill development

CSL experiences are specifically designed to develop a wide range of professional skills that are essential for employability. These include technical skills specific to the discipline, as well as transferable soft skills such as teamwork, communication, adaptability and leadership.

PRACTICAL USE

Educators can incorporate skills assessment tools into the toolkit, helping students identify and track their professional development throughout their CSL experience. For example, students can receive feedback on their ability to communicate effectively, collaborate with diverse teams or manage projects.

BENEFIT FOR EDUCATORS

By integrating these assessments into the CSL framework, educators not only help students gain technical knowledge but also prepare them for the demands of the modern workplace.

5 Building professional networks

Through CSL, students interact with professionals, organisations and businesses, creating opportunities to build professional relationships that will be valuable throughout their careers.

PRACTICAL USE

Educators can use the toolkit to design networking opportunities, such as mentor pairings, career fairs or business panels, where students can interact with industry leaders and potential employers.

BENEFIT FOR EDUCATORS

By fostering strong connections between students and industry professionals, CSL helps enhance students' employment prospects and strengthens the institution's ties to the community and the labour market.

6 Enhancing student engagement and motivation

CSL inherently increases student engagement by demonstrating the real-world relevance of academic content. When students see the direct application of their learning to professional settings, they become more motivated and committed to their studies.

PRACTICAL USE

Educators can use the toolkit to align CSL projects with course materials and create assignments that challenge students to apply what they have learned to solve real-world problems.

BENEFIT FOR EDUCATORS

Engaged students are more likely to perform better academically, attend classes regularly and show greater enthusiasm towards their learning.

7 Preparing students for rapid change and adaptability

In today's dynamic world, students must develop the ability to adapt to rapidly changing professional environments. CSL gives students the opportunity to experience different work settings and navigate challenges that require flexibility and quick thinking.

PRACTICAL USE

Educators can design CSL projects that expose students to diverse industries or contexts, helping them build adaptability. This could include remote work projects or cross-disciplinary collaborations that require students to develop new skills.

BENEFIT FOR EDUCATORS

CSL prepares students for the demands of the modern workforce, ensuring they are adaptable, resourceful and resilient in the face of change.

8 Supporting career exploration and clarity

CSL experiences allow students to explore different professional roles and career paths, giving them a clearer understanding of where their interests and skills align.

PRACTICAL USE

Educators can use the toolkit to guide students through career exploration activities, such as job shadowing, internships or reflective career assessment tools.

BENEFIT FOR EDUCATORS

CSL helps students identify and refine their career goals, making it easier for them to navigate job searches and professional opportunities after graduation.

Institutional and societal benefits

For institutions

CSL provides an opportunity to strengthen community partnerships, enhance institutional reputation and contribute to economic development. The toolkit helps educators align CSL initiatives with institutional goals, ensuring that CSL is a strategic priority for both student development and community engagement.

For society

CSL fosters civic responsibility and prepares students to be active, socially responsible professionals. By working on real-world issues such as sustainability, health and education, CSL projects have a direct positive impact on communities and help address societal challenges.

CONCLUSION

The CSL toolkit provides educators with a structured, actionable framework for embedding experiential learning, career development and community engagement into their curricula. By equipping students with both academic knowledge and practical, career-relevant skills, CSL prepares graduates who are ready to contribute meaningfully to the workforce and society. For educators, the toolkit is a resource to implement CSL effectively, ensuring enhanced learning outcomes, improved employability and stronger institutional connections with the community and industry.

1.3 Alignment with EU resolutions and Career Management Skills (CMS) frameworks

Career Service Learning (CSL) provides an innovative and practical way to connect students' academic learning with real-world career development opportunities.

By aligning CSL with European Union (EU) resolutions, strategic initiatives and the Career Management Skills (CMS) Framework, educators can enhance the impact of CSL on students' career preparedness and employability. Below is a breakdown of how CSL aligns with key EU policies and frameworks, offering a clear roadmap for educators to implement CSL effectively within the European educational context.

CSL is strategically positioned within the broader European policy landscape, aligning with key EU initiatives that prioritise skills development, lifelong learning and career preparedness. This alignment ensures that CSL implementation supports EU objectives while addressing contemporary workforce challenges.

1 European Skills Agenda 2020

The European Skills Agenda (2020) is a comprehensive initiative aimed at strengthening skills across the EU. It focuses on making skills development more responsive to market needs, fostering lifelong learning and increasing workforce adaptability. CSL supports the following key objectives of the Agenda:

- **Skills intelligence enhancement:** by engaging in CSL projects, students gain direct insight into industry needs, creating a feedback loop that informs curriculum adjustments and ensures that students are prepared for the labour market.
- **Upskilling and reskilling:** CSL promotes continuous learning through hands-on work experiences, enabling students to gain new skills, particularly in areas where gaps exist in the workforce.
- **Partnership building:** CSL naturally fosters collaboration between higher education institutions and industry partners, a vital element of the Skills Agenda's goals.

CSL supports key actions of the European Skills Agenda. Action 2, strengthening skills intelligence: CSL projects help identify current skills gaps by involving employers in the learning process. Action 8, developing skills to support the twin transitions (digital and green): CSL projects can focus on sustainability and digital skills, areas emphasised by the EU's transition agenda.

2 European Year of Skills 2023

The European Year of Skills 2023 focuses on reskilling and upskilling, helping individuals gain the skills needed for quality jobs, especially in sectors facing skills shortages such as the green and digital industries. CSL directly aligns with the priorities of this initiative:

- **Promoting investment in training:** CSL acts as a model for continuous skills development, integrating learning with practical experience so that students graduate with both theoretical knowledge and professional skills.
- **Ensuring skills relevance:** CSL projects involve direct employer participation, ensuring that the skills developed align with the current needs of the labour market.
- **Matching skills with opportunities:** CSL acts as a bridge between education and employment, particularly through projects focused on the digital and green transitions, which are central to the EU's economic development agenda.
- **Attracting and developing talent:** by involving students in CSL, higher education institutions make European universities more attractive to students, as they develop competences highly valued by employers.

3 Career Management Skills (CMS) frameworks

The Career Management Skills (CMS) Framework, as outlined by the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (2015), defines the competences individuals need to manage their careers and transition through educational and occupational stages. CSL addresses the core components of CMS:

Self-awareness and personal development

Practical application: CSL allows students to reflect on their real-world experiences, helping them understand their strengths, weaknesses and career aspirations.
Networking opportunities: direct interaction with industry professionals builds students' networks, enhancing career awareness and opportunities.

Career exploration and information management

Exposure to industry practices: CSL provides hands-on experience in diverse industries, helping students understand the working environment and available career paths.
Labour market insights: employer engagement gives students direct access to up-to-date labour market information, facilitating informed career decisions.

Decision-making and transition skills

Problem solving and critical thinking: students develop problem-solving and decision-making skills as they address real challenges faced by community partners.
Teamwork and communication: CSL projects require collaboration with peers and professionals, developing teamwork and professional communication skills.

4 Council Recommendation on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning (2018)

The Council Recommendation on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning (2018) outlines the competences essential for personal and professional development. CSL addresses all eight key competences, with a focus on:

- **Personal, social and learning to learn competence:** through reflection and teamwork, students develop resilience and the ability to manage their own learning and career.
- **Communication and collaboration:** CSL experiences hone professional communication skills and the ability to work effectively in diverse teams.
- **Entrepreneurship and innovation:** CSL encourages entrepreneurial thinking, allowing students to develop innovative solutions to real-world problems.
- **Citizenship and social responsibility:** by engaging with community organisations, CSL fosters an understanding of civic responsibility and social engagement, vital elements of modern professional life.

5 European Green Deal and Twin Transition

The European Green Deal and the twin (green and digital) transition are central to the EU's vision for a sustainable and technologically advanced economy. CSL contributes to these transitions through:

- **Green skills development:** CSL projects that address sustainability challenges, such as environmental conservation, clean energy and green business practices, provide students with essential green skills.
- **Digital competence building:** CSL projects that incorporate digital tools, such as remote collaboration platforms and data analysis, develop students' digital literacy and readiness for digital transformation.
- **Innovation and entrepreneurship:** CSL encourages students to explore innovative, sustainable business solutions that contribute to social change and the green economy.

6 European Education Area (EEA) Strategic Framework

The European Education Area (EEA) promotes quality, inclusion, digital transformation and the green transition in education. CSL aligns with the EEA's priorities in several ways:

- **Quality enhancement:** CSL enhances the academic learning experience by applying theoretical knowledge to real-world situations, fostering deeper, more meaningful learning.
- **Inclusion promotion:** by engaging with diverse community partners, CSL ensures educational opportunities for students from all backgrounds, promoting inclusivity.
- **Digital integration:** CSL leverages digital tools and platforms to facilitate collaboration, reflection and knowledge sharing, contributing to the EU's Digital Education Action Plan.
- **Green focus:** sustainability-focused CSL projects allow students to contribute to environmental goals, in line with EU sustainability objectives.

7 European Pillar of Social Rights

The European Pillar of Social Rights guarantees access to education, training and lifelong learning for all EU citizens. CSL directly supports the Pillar's principles:

- **Principle 1 (education, training and lifelong learning):** CSL provides students with continuous learning opportunities through work-based experiences, ensuring lifelong learning pathways.
- **Principle 4 (active support to employment):** CSL bridges the gap between education and employment, facilitating students' transition into the workforce.
- **Principle 5 (secure and adaptable employment):** CSL enhances students' adaptability and resilience by preparing them for dynamic work environments.

8 ESCO Framework integration

The ESCO Framework (European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations) provides a standardised classification system for skills and qualifications. CSL should reference ESCO to:

- **Standardise skill descriptions:** CSL projects can be mapped to ESCO classifications to ensure that skills developed through service learning are recognised and transferable across EU institutions.
- **Support transparent career pathways:** mapping CSL outcomes to ESCO categories supports clearer career pathways, helping students navigate the labour market.

9 Implementation recommendations

To ensure alignment with EU frameworks, CSL programmes should:

- **Map learning outcomes:** align CSL learning outcomes with CMS competences and ESCO classifications to ensure consistency with European standards.
- **Use European tools:** document CSL skills and experiences using tools like Europass and digital badges to enhance students' employability profiles.
- **Collaborate across borders:** share best practices with other European institutions to strengthen CSL initiatives and develop common standards.

10 Quality assurance and recognition

CSL programmes must include mechanisms for:

- **Learning outcome assessment:** assess CSL learning outcomes using the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) levels to ensure quality and recognition.
- **Competence validation:** use European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning experiences.
- **Employer engagement:** involve employers in defining skill requirements to ensure the relevance of CSL programmes.
- **Continuous improvement:** adapt CSL programmes based on feedback from stakeholders, including students, faculty and employers.

IN SUMMARY

The integration of CSL with EU resolutions and frameworks positions it as a critical tool in shaping the future of higher education and career preparedness. By aligning CSL with key EU policies such as the European Skills Agenda, the European Year of Skills and the CMS frameworks, educators ensure that CSL contributes to the development of a skilled, adaptable and socially responsible workforce. This alignment enhances students' career prospects and supports broader EU objectives related to lifelong learning, sustainable economic development and social inclusion.

1.4 Target audience

The Toolkit Guidance for HEI Educators on Career Development through CSL Practices is designed to provide practical insights and tools for various stakeholders in higher education.

These include university and college educators across disciplines, career counsellors and student service professionals, and academic policymakers and curriculum developers. Below is an explanation of the toolkit's practical value tailored to each target audience.

01
University and college educators
across all disciplines

02
Career counsellors
and student service professionals

03
Academic policymakers
and curriculum developers

1. University and college educators across disciplines

For educators in diverse academic fields, CSL provides an innovative way to bridge the gap between theoretical learning and real-world application. The practical value of this toolkit includes:

- **Enhance student engagement:** CSL fosters deeper student engagement by showing how academic content is relevant to the real world. Educators can use the toolkit to integrate CSL into their courses, ensuring that students not only learn theoretical concepts but also apply them in professional settings. This makes learning more meaningful and motivating.
- **Development of career-ready competences:** educators can use CSL to help students develop both discipline-specific technical skills and transferable soft skills such as communication, teamwork, leadership and adaptability. The toolkit offers practical methods for embedding these skills within course content and assignments.
- **Practical application of theoretical knowledge:** CSL projects create opportunities for students to apply academic knowledge to real problems faced by community partners or businesses. This provides a practical context, improving retention and understanding.
- **Interdisciplinary collaboration:** CSL encourages cross-disciplinary partnerships. Educators can collaborate with colleagues from other faculties, creating multifaceted projects that involve students from different fields. The toolkit provides guidelines on how to set up such projects.
- **Incorporating reflection and career development:** educators can guide students to reflect critically on their experiences, helping them develop self-awareness, refine career goals and improve decision-making skills. This also encourages the development of a professional identity and enhances overall career preparedness.

2. Career counsellors and student service professionals

For career counsellors and student service professionals, CSL represents a valuable tool for career development and holistic student support. The practical value of this toolkit for this audience includes:

- **Supporting career exploration:** CSL provides students with hands-on experience in various industries and roles, offering them insight into different career paths. Career counsellors can use CSL as a resource to help students explore professions, identify their strengths and preferences, and make more informed

career decisions. The toolkit offers step-by-step guidance on how to integrate CSL into career counselling sessions.

- **Connecting students with employers:** by fostering partnerships between academic institutions and businesses or community organisations, CSL creates opportunities for students to engage with potential employers. Career counsellors can leverage these connections to facilitate internships, mentorships and job opportunities. The toolkit provides recommendations on how to establish and nurture these partnerships, ensuring that students benefit from them.
- **Building Career Management Skills (CMS):** career counsellors can guide students in developing critical CMS through CSL experiences. The toolkit offers practical exercises to enhance self-awareness, career exploration, decision-making and transition skills, all essential elements of CMS. These skills are important not only for securing employment but also for ongoing career progression.
- **Enhancing soft skills development:** CSL is an excellent platform for fostering soft skills such as communication, collaboration and problem-solving. The toolkit provides career counsellors with resources to help students recognise the importance of these skills and learn how to develop and showcase them. Soft skills are increasingly valued by employers, and CSL helps students gain these competences in real-world contexts.
- **Providing continuous support:** career counsellors and student service professionals can use CSL to provide continuous career support throughout a student's academic journey. The toolkit includes strategies for integrating CSL into career counselling activities, from first-year students to those nearing graduation, ensuring that career development is a sustained, ongoing process.

3. Academic policymakers and curriculum developers

For academic policymakers and curriculum developers, the toolkit offers valuable resources to design and implement career development-focused curricula that incorporate CSL. The practical value of the toolkit for this audience includes:

- **Aligning curriculum with labour market needs:** CSL aligns academic learning with industry needs, ensuring that students develop relevant, marketable skills. Curriculum developers can use the toolkit to design CSL-integrated courses and programmes that meet the current demands of the workforce, particularly in the green and digital sectors. This ensures that students graduate with skills that are in high demand.
- **Promoting lifelong learning and skills development:** CSL supports lifelong learning by encouraging students to acquire new skills through practical experiences. Policymakers can use the toolkit to support upskilling and reskilling initiatives, ensuring that the curriculum remains relevant in a rapidly changing job market. By incorporating CSL, higher education institutions can prepare students for long-term career success.
- **Encouraging cross-sector collaboration:** CSL encourages collaboration between higher education institutions, businesses and community organisations. Academic policymakers can use the toolkit to design frameworks that facilitate these partnerships, which are crucial for effective skills development. The toolkit provides practical advice on how to foster strong, mutually beneficial relationships between universities and external partners.
- **Improving graduate employability:** curriculum developers can use CSL to design programmes that enhance students' employability by providing hands-on, real-world experience. The toolkit emphasises integrating CSL into curricula so that students gain not only academic knowledge but also the practical

skills needed in the workforce. This alignment is critical for improving employment outcomes and career progression.

- **Integrating career development into curriculum design:** the toolkit offers practical guidelines on how to embed career development into the academic curriculum, including opportunities for CSL within course structure, assessment and learning outcomes. By using CSL, policymakers can ensure that career development is not treated as a standalone service but is integrated into the core educational experience.
- **Supporting educational innovation:** the toolkit encourages innovative teaching practices by promoting experiential learning through CSL. Curriculum developers can use CSL as a model for creating more dynamic, interactive and engaging learning environments that prepare students for both professional and personal growth.

Summary

The toolkit offers practical value to three key groups in higher education:

1. **University and college educators** can enrich their teaching by integrating CSL into their courses, enhancing student engagement and career readiness.
2. **Career counsellors and student service professionals** can use CSL as a tool to guide students in career exploration, development and transition, building essential competences and connections with employers.
3. **Academic policymakers and curriculum developers** can ensure that their curricula remain aligned with labour market needs, promoting cross-sector collaboration and lifelong learning through the strategic integration of CSL.

CONCLUSION

By adopting CSL practices, all three groups contribute to a skilled, adaptable workforce that is better prepared for the challenges of the 21st-century job market, benefiting both students and the wider economy.

2

CHAPTER 2

Understanding Career Service Learning (CSL)

2.1 What is CSL?

2.2 Key theories and modern pedagogical approaches

2.3 Models for including CSL in the HE curriculum

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2.1 What is CSL?

Community Service Learning (CSL) is grounded in experiential learning theory, which emphasises the connection between cognition and action (Overall, 2010; Tran & Tran, 2020).

This theory posits that learning is most effective when it is directly tied to real-world experiences. Dewey (1997), in his study of the Progressive Education Movement, argued for an education that is of, by and for experience. Accordingly, community service activities, such as those implemented through CSL, provide students with opportunities to engage in experiential learning that bridges the gap between academic knowledge and real-world application (Cook, 2008).

The concept of experiential learning is further developed through a four-phase cycle (Kolb, 1984):

1	2	3	4
Concrete experience	**Reflective observation**	**Abstract conceptualisation**	**Active experimentation**

This cycle not only describes how learning unfolds through experience but also serves as a theoretical framework for integrating CSL into academic curricula (Petkus, 2000; Salam et al., 2019b). CSL activities therefore enable students to engage in meaningful, hands-on experiences linked to their academic courses, allowing them to better understand the course content while addressing genuine community needs.

The practice of CSL first emerged in the United States in the 1960s and expanded through the 1990s, with the integration of CSL into higher education curricula becoming increasingly widespread. By the early 2000s, more than a third of American universities and colleges offered service-learning courses (Student Horizons, Inc., 2008). CSL has since gained global traction and has been incorporated into educational systems around the world (Salam et al., 2019a).

CSL can be defined in several ways. Kaye (2010) defines CSL as a form of experiential learning in which students apply academic knowledge and critical thinking skills to address real-world community needs. Bringle and Hatcher (1996) provide a more comprehensive definition:

> "A credit-bearing, educational experience in which students participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and reflects on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of the course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility" (p. 112).

As an educational approach, CSL also implies elements of volunteering, community action and citizenship, all while promoting an active process of acquiring knowledge, reflecting on experiences and developing new insights (Barwani et al., 2010).

Career-Based Service Learning combines traditional community service with a structured school- and work-based opportunity to explore a career field, emphasising the connections between the service experiences, career readiness skill development and academic learning. Students benefit by acquiring career-related skills and knowledge while learning civic responsibility and gaining personal satisfaction. Service learning can take the form of short-term projects and can be individual, team or classroom oriented.

Career Service Learning (CSL) is a pedagogical approach that combines academic education with practical experience in real-world settings. By participating in CSL programmes, students gain key competences, particularly soft skills such as communication, teamwork and problem-solving, while improving their employability. Through interaction with employers and participation in projects from the business sector, non-governmental organisations and public institutions, students are trained for dynamic work environments. The implementation of CSL in higher education programmes occurs through various models adapted to curriculum objectives, fields of study and available resources.

Career-based service learning is a career exploration experience that engages students in project-based learning to improve their communities by addressing community needs and connecting the learning experience to related careers. It takes a traditional service-learning opportunity and connects the project to appropriate industry partners, enabling the student to develop related professional skills. CSL is implemented as part of course obligations, where students collaborate with organisations and companies in real-world environments. The emphasis is on reflective learning, where students analyse their experiences through written reports and presentations. The university cooperates with business entities, providing students with practical work on specific projects.

Integration of CSL into the curriculum means that service activities are an integral part of the course curriculum. These activities are mandatory and are considered in the assessment process. This model ensures a systematic connection between academic content and practical experiences, enabling the direct application of theory in real-life situations.

BENEFITS OF CSL

- Students apply knowledge, critical thinking and good judgement to address genuine community needs.
- Engages students in experiential, hands-on projects in the community while deepening their understanding of an area of career interest.
- Develops skills, habits and attitudes vital to career success.
- Helps students understand the needs of their local businesses, non-profit organisations and agencies.
- Provides the context in which students can gain organisational, team, problem-solving and critical thinking skills, along with the attitudes and capabilities necessary to succeed in work and life.

2.2 Key theories and modern pedagogical approaches

1. Experiential Learning Theory and reflective practice

Experiential Learning Theory (ELT), developed by David A. Kolb, asserts that learning occurs through direct experience. The process comprises four cyclical stages: Concrete Experience, Reflective Observation, Abstract Conceptualisation and Active Experimentation. ELT emphasises the importance of reflection in transforming experiences into knowledge (Kolb, 1984).

In CSL, experiential learning fosters students' development by linking theoretical knowledge with practical applications. Engaging in real-world projects, internships and community service activities allows students to apply concepts and critically analyse their experiences. Research suggests that experiential learning enhances retention, problem-solving and professional skills (Dewey, 1938; Moon, 1999).

Reflective practice, pioneered by Donald Schön (1983), further enriches experiential learning. By systematically reflecting on experiences, students deepen their understanding and improve their decision-making abilities. Reflection journals, guided discussions and structured feedback sessions are widely used to facilitate this process in CSL environments (Boud et al., 1985).

CSL practices that incorporate experiential learning often use project-based learning (PBL), service learning and community-based projects to enhance student engagement. These activities encourage students to critically evaluate their experiences, promoting deeper learning and personal growth. By combining ELT with CSL, students gain valuable competences such as leadership, teamwork and ethical reasoning (Eyler & Giles, 1999). Institutions implementing CSL frameworks often integrate real-world scenarios, allowing students to develop practical skills in safe and structured settings (Kolb & Kolb, 2009).

Studies also show that experiential learning in CSL leads to improved civic responsibility, cultural competency and social awareness (Ash & Clayton, 2009). These outcomes are particularly relevant in globalised economies where students must navigate diverse workplaces. Further research has demonstrated that experiential learning fosters professional identity development, particularly in fields such as education, healthcare and social work (Furco, 2002; Mezirow, 1991).

2. Integrated curriculum design and Design Thinking

Design thinking is a human-centred approach to problem solving, widely promoted by institutions like IDEO and Stanford's d.school (Stanford d.school, 2021). The method emphasises empathy, ideation, prototyping and iterative testing, core elements that can be integrated into academic projects to bridge theory and practice.

Integrated curriculum design promotes interdisciplinary learning by dissolving traditional subject boundaries, offering students a more cohesive and relevant educational experience (Beane, 1997). In the context of CSL, this approach enables students to connect academic theories with real-world societal issues, fostering holistic learning and critical thinking (Drake & Burns, 2004).

Design Thinking (DT), popularised by Tim Brown (2009), emphasises empathy, ideation, prototyping and testing. When applied to CSL, DT equips students to tackle complex challenges, encouraging creativity and innovation in service projects (Brown & Katz, 2011). Implementations of DT in CSL include social entrepreneurship initiatives, collaborative workshops and hands-on problem-solving exercises (Razzouk & Shute, 2012).

The integration of DT into CSL enhances students' abilities to approach real-world problems methodically, combining multiple disciplines to find effective solutions. The iterative process of prototyping, testing and refining solutions allows students to improve their approaches based on feedback, leading to more meaningful and sustainable CSL initiatives. DT also fosters empathy by requiring students to deeply understand the needs of the communities they engage with, enhancing both their social awareness and professional skill sets (Liedtka, 2015).

3. Agile and adaptive learning environments

Agile project management, originally developed in the tech industry, has been adapted for educational contexts to create responsive, iterative learning environments. Agile methodologies encourage teamwork, rapid prototyping and regular feedback, all of which align well with the goals of CSL. Agile learning emphasises flexibility, responsiveness and iterative learning cycles (Highsmith, 2009). In education, agile learning environments encourage collaboration, adaptability and feedback-driven learning. These characteristics align well with CSL, where students engage in dynamic, community-based projects that require rapid adjustments and problem-solving (Kohls & Wedekind, 2011).

Adaptive learning, often technology-driven, tailors educational experiences to individual learners' needs. Using artificial intelligence and analytics, adaptive systems modify content delivery based on student performance (Dziuban et al., 2018). In CSL, adaptive learning ensures personalised instruction, supporting diverse learning styles and abilities (Siemens, 2013).

Agile and adaptive learning methodologies ensure that CSL learning remains dynamic and responsive. Educators implementing agile approaches often emphasise real-world problem-solving, iterative assessment and student-led projects. Adaptive learning tools, such as AI-driven learning platforms, allow for customised educational experiences that cater to students' strengths and weaknesses, ensuring that students remain engaged and receive the support they need (Wang et al., 2020).

By incorporating agile and adaptive learning environments, CSL programmes can become more flexible and student-centred. Traditional learning models often struggle with real-world unpredictability, but agile methodologies allow for continuous feedback loops, ensuring that learning experiences evolve alongside the needs of students and the community (Reigeluth et al., 2017).

Further research suggests that agile learning fosters higher-order thinking skills, including creativity, resilience and an entrepreneurial mindset (Scrum Alliance, 2021). These competences are crucial for CSL initiatives, where students navigate complex, real-world challenges. Studies have also shown that agile learning increases motivation and engagement by allowing students to take ownership of their learning processes (Salas et al., 2012).

4. Digital transformation and micro-credentialing

The digital transformation in education has led to new pedagogical models incorporating online platforms, virtual simulations and digital tools (Selwyn, 2016). Digital literacy has become a critical skill for career development, making it essential to integrate technology into CSL (Means et al., 2013).

Digital transformation also enables students to engage in CSL experiences through online platforms, making learning more accessible to non-traditional students and individuals in remote areas. Institutions have increasingly adopted digital service-learning initiatives, where students collaborate with global partners on social projects using technology (Molnar, 2020). Studies have highlighted the role of gamification in CSL, using digital badges, leaderboards and interactive simulations to enhance engagement and motivation (Deterding et al., 2011).

Online learning tools and adaptive learning platforms enhance CSL by offering customised educational pathways tailored to each student's progress (Siemens, 2013). This approach ensures that CSL participants receive targeted support and resources, optimising their learning outcomes (Means et al., 2014).

Recent studies emphasise that micro-credentials are becoming a standard in higher education and workforce development, as they provide verifiable, stackable credentials aligned with industry needs (Hickey & Otto, 2022). The integration of micro-credentials into CSL enhances students' ability to document their practical skills, giving them an edge in competitive job markets.

Micro-credentialing offers students targeted, competency-based certifications that enhance employability (Oliver, 2019). These digital badges provide verifiable proof of skills acquired through CSL experiences, bridging academic and professional gaps (Ghasia et al., 2020). Employers increasingly value micro-credentials as evidence of industry-relevant expertise (Wheelahan & Moodie, 2021).

Blockchain technology is being explored as a means of verifying digital credentials, ensuring security and authenticity. Research suggests that students who earn micro-credentials through CSL programmes benefit from improved job prospects, particularly in industries that require specialised, evidence-based competences (Grech & Camilleri, 2017). The expansion of digital transformation in CSL also includes the use of artificial intelligence for personalised learning, virtual reality for immersive experiences and data analytics for student progress tracking (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004).

Digital collaboration platforms (such as Microsoft Teams, Slack or Trello) and e-learning environments (e.g. Moodle, Canvas) facilitate remote and hybrid learning models. These resources provide evidence-based support for integrating digital tools into CSL frameworks (World Economic Forum, 2020; MIT Sloan, 2021).

2.3 Models for including CSL in the HE curriculum

MODEL 1

Integration of CSL into the curriculum

Definition

Integration of CSL into the curriculum means that service activities are an integral part of the course curriculum. These activities are mandatory and are considered in the assessment process. This model ensures a systematic connection between academic content and practical experiences, enabling the direct application of theory in real-life situations.

Methodological approach

CSL is implemented as part of course obligations, where students collaborate with organisations and companies in real-world environments.

- The emphasis is on reflective learning, where students analyse their experiences through written reports and presentations.
- The university cooperates with business entities, providing students with practical work on specific projects.

Examples of best practice in economics and business studies

- **Entrepreneurial incubators:** entrepreneurship students develop and test business models in collaboration with local entrepreneurs and the start-up ecosystem.
- **Tax consulting:** economics students work with companies to analyse tax policies and propose optimisations for legal entities.
- **Development of sustainable business models:** in the course Corporate Social Responsibility, students create sustainability strategies for real companies.
- **Risk assessment:** in the Financial Analysis course, finance students conduct risk assessments and propose investment strategies based on real company data.
- **Sustainable tourism:** in the Environmental Economics course, students analyse sustainable tourism development opportunities in the region.

EFFECTS ON COMPETENCY DEVELOPMENT

The inclusion of CSL in the curriculum contributes to the development of analytical skills, improved communication abilities and enhanced problem-solving capacity. Students also gain practical knowledge essential for their employability. Through client interaction, they develop autonomy and responsibility in business decision-making.

CHALLENGES

One of the main challenges in implementing this model is the need to adjust the curriculum and the additional engagement of academic staff in organising service activities.

MODEL 2

Project-based work as a form of CSL

Definition

Project-based CSL focuses on solving real business or social challenges. Students work in interdisciplinary teams where they analyse data, develop strategies and create solutions for partners from the business or public sector.

Methodological approach

- Students work in project teams to analyse data, develop business strategies or suggest improvements for existing processes.
- At the end of the project, they present the results, which can be implemented by the organisations.
- Project-based work promotes active learning, teamwork and the development of entrepreneurial competences.

Examples of best practice in economics and business studies

- **Market trend analysis:** marketing students analyse trends in consumer behaviour and propose digital advertising strategies for local businesses.
- **Financial analysis of companies:** as part of the Financial Management course, students analyse company balance sheets and suggest measures to improve financial stability.
- **Supply chain optimisation:** logistics students study a company's supply chains and recommend actions to reduce costs and improve efficiency.

EFFECTS ON COMPETENCY DEVELOPMENT

Participation in project teams helps develop teamwork, project management and critical thinking skills. Students gain experience in creating innovative solutions and negotiating with business stakeholders, enhancing their competitiveness in the job market.

CHALLENGES

The main limitation of this model is the need for alignment with organisations, which must provide real projects and constructive feedback to students.

MODEL 3

Community-based practice as a model of CSL

Definition

Community-based practice focuses on direct collaboration between students and organisations in the public and non-governmental sectors. Students contribute to the development of the local community while gaining practical experience.

Methodological approach

- Students engage in advisory, analytical or development projects in cooperation with social enterprises, municipalities or government organisations.
- Reflection involves evaluating the economic and social impact of their contribution and its connection to academic knowledge.
- An interdisciplinary approach is often used, bringing together students from different fields (economics, management, public administration).

Examples of best practice in economics and business studies

- **Support for social enterprises:** management students advise social enterprises on optimising business models and financial planning.
- **Economic analysis of local communities:** economics students research the economic development of small municipalities and propose strategies for sustainable growth.
- **Microfinancing and entrepreneurship development:** in the Development Economics course, students study microfinancing models and help design support mechanisms for entrepreneurs in less developed regions.

EFFECTS ON COMPETENCY DEVELOPMENT

Participation in community projects enhances students' understanding of socio-economic challenges, empathy and adaptability. Practical experiences improve their employability, especially in the public and non-governmental sectors.

CHALLENGES

A significant challenge is the need for long-term partnerships with organisations and ensuring equal learning experiences for all students.

TABLE 1 · COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF CSL MODELS

Model	Key features	Effects on competences	Challenges
Integration into the curriculum	CSL as part of course requirements.	Development of analytical and communication skills, improved employability.	Requires curriculum adaptation.
Project-based work	Solving real business challenges.	Development of teamwork, project management and innovation skills.	Requires coordination with partners.
Community-based practice	Direct collaboration with NGOs.	Enhances social responsibility and real-world experience.	Requires long-term partnerships.

CSL is an important component of modern higher education, as it contributes to the development of student competences and enhances their employability. **The choice of a CSL model depends on the specific learning objectives and the resources available to institutions and students.**

3

CHAPTER 3

Methodologies for integrating CSL into teaching

AT Austria

RS Serbia

GR Greece

SI Slovenia

SK Slovakia

3.1–3.4 Models, course design, teaching strategies and success factors in each country

Co-funded by the European Union

PARTNER-COUNTRY PRACTICE

Austria

In Austria, micro-credentials are increasingly discussed in the context of flexible learning pathways and lifelong learning strategies.

While a national framework for micro-credentials is still under development, Austrian higher education institutions, particularly Universities of Applied Sciences (Fachhochschulen), already experiment with modular, competence-based learning elements that can be recognised as micro-credentials. These initiatives often align with employability, civic engagement and sustainability competences, which are also central to the CSL approach.

3.1 Models of CSL implementation

Curriculum-based CSL: integrating CSL into courses

Due to the academic freedom of teaching in Austria, lecturers have autonomy in selecting teaching methods and assessment formats. However, integration of CSL typically occurs through consultations with programme directors to ensure alignment with learning outcomes.

At the University of Applied Sciences Burgenland (UASB), several compulsory courses within the BIWB and BISB programmes are structured around real-world challenges. Companies describe specific problems, and students work in teams to propose and present solutions. In some cases, students address challenges from their own workplaces, creating a direct link between study and employment contexts: a strong example of Career Service Learning.

An interdisciplinary example is a course coordinated at the Pinkafeld campus, where students from different disciplines collaborate on cross-sectoral projects. For part-time students, the Practical Project module allows them to apply theoretical concepts directly within their professional environments, supported by guest lectures from the business sector and structured reflection activities.

Project-based CSL: interdisciplinary collaboration and real-world problem-solving

Project-based CSL is deeply rooted in Austrian practice-oriented higher education. The Fachhochschul-Konferenz (Association of Universities of Applied Sciences in Austria) refers to a toolkit developed in a 2018 project on internships that provides guidance on linking academic and professional learning.

At UASB, CSL is embedded in various interdisciplinary initiatives, including:

- Career Day events and alumni webinars on current professional topics;
- the BISB Student Club, which fosters peer mentoring, scientific writing challenges and collaboration;
- international buddy and tandem programmes supporting intercultural learning;
- IPMA certification training, promoting project management competence;
- business and management projects (BIWB, MIWB, MIWM) that integrate sustainability, innovation and reflective components.

3.2 Designing CSL-based courses

Structuring CSL activities within academic courses

CSL activities at Austrian universities of applied sciences are structured as a continuous process combining preparation, action and reflection phases. The process often follows these steps:

1. **Orientation and problem definition** (lecturer and company/client meeting)
2. **Analytical phase** (students analyse the problem using theoretical frameworks)
3. **Action phase** (students develop and implement a solution)
4. **Reflection and presentation** (students critically assess learning outcomes and social impact)

For instance, in the Entrepreneurship Project or the Practical Project module, each student group is assigned a project manager and a client representative. The methodology combines case study work, problem-solving strategies and structured reflection supported by feedback sessions.

Balancing theory, practice and reflection

CSL courses are characterised by the interplay between theory and practice. The Sustainability Skill Set modules, such as Analytical & Strategic Thinking and Decision Making and Collaborative Partnership (ColPA), demonstrate how theoretical models are transformed into practice through applied projects.

Reflection tools include guided reflection diaries, peer feedback and self-assessment rubrics that enable students to evaluate their development in professional and civic competences.

Incorporating learning outcomes that align with career development

CSL courses in Austria explicitly link learning outcomes to employability, entrepreneurship and lifelong learning. Students are encouraged to transform theoretical insights into practical solutions, fostering innovation and social responsibility. Outcomes often emphasise:

- problem-solving and analytical thinking;
- entrepreneurial mindset;
- collaborative project management;
- ethical and sustainable decision-making;
- lifelong learning orientation.

3.3 Teaching strategies for CSL

Problem-Based Learning (PBL) and case studies

Problem-based learning forms the backbone of many CSL-integrated courses. For example, in the entrepreneurship courses (BGET and BEUM), students identify a real-world problem, develop a sustainable business idea, implement it in written and presentation form, and present it to a professional audience during the eNova Conference.

Similarly, in the BIWB marketing courses, students collaborate with companies to develop a marketing plan for a new product or brand. Company representatives provide feedback and assess the final concepts. This approach encourages authentic learning through active collaboration and real evaluation.

Experiential learning methods (role-playing, simulation, service projects)

A range of experiential learning techniques is used to deepen engagement and reflection:

- **Change Management Simulation Game:** students experience the dynamics of organisational change;
- **role-playing and service projects,** where students simulate stakeholder dialogues or community engagement initiatives;
- **guest lectures and field visits,** which contextualise theory within real organisational environments.

Using technology for virtual CSL experiences

While virtual CSL is still under development in Austria, institutions increasingly use digital collaboration tools (MS Teams, Miro, Moodle forums) to facilitate teamwork across campuses and to connect students with international or remote partners. These tools allow for blended CSL experiences that maintain reflective and interactive components even in online formats.

3.4 Effective strategies for CSL experiences that promote career development and lifelong learning

Austrian higher education institutions have identified several success factors for effective CSL integration:

- **Institutional flexibility** allowing lecturers to design innovative teaching formats;
- **strong collaboration with external partners** (companies, NGOs, municipalities) that ensures real-world relevance;
- **structured reflection** as an integral part of assessment, promoting metacognitive learning;
- **alignment of CSL projects with employability and sustainable development goals,** reinforcing students' sense of purpose;
- **recognition of CSL outcomes through micro-credentials,** which validate transversal competences and support lifelong learning pathways.

Overall, CSL in Austria contributes to bridging academic learning with career development, empowering students to become reflective professionals and engaged citizens.

PARTNER-COUNTRY PRACTICE

Slovenia

In Slovenia, the concept of micro-credentials is gaining attention within the national higher education framework, particularly following the Council Recommendation on a European approach to micro-credentials (2022).

Several universities and higher education institutions are piloting micro-credential programmes to promote lifelong learning, employability and the recognition of short, competence-based learning experiences.

Projects such as ELIX have played a key role in linking micro-credentials with career development, civic engagement and service learning, fostering cooperation between academia and the labour market. Slovenian higher education institutions, especially those oriented towards applied and professional study programmes, recognise CSL (Career and Service Learning) as a pedagogical approach that supports students' holistic professional and personal growth.

3.1 Models of CSL implementation

Curriculum-based CSL: integrating CSL into courses

In Slovenia, CSL is most commonly implemented within courses that integrate community or workplace collaboration as part of the curriculum. Universities such as the University of Novo mesto (UNM) have introduced career-oriented modules where students link theoretical knowledge with practical experience in organisations or communities.

For example, in courses related to management, communication and career development, students collaborate with local employers, NGOs or municipal services to analyse real-life challenges (e.g. sustainability, youth employability or local entrepreneurship) and propose solutions. These activities are embedded in the curriculum and formally assessed, ensuring that CSL contributes directly to course learning outcomes.

The integration of CSL is supported by career centres and project offices, which mediate cooperation with external stakeholders. Lecturers have the autonomy to adapt the CSL model to the subject's goals, whether through project work, mentoring activities or reflection assignments.

Project-based CSL: interdisciplinary collaboration and real-world problem-solving

Elements of CSL in Slovenia take the shape of interdisciplinary project work. Within programmes such as business, education and social studies, students work in teams to address authentic challenges proposed by partner organisations. Typical examples include:

- collaborative research projects addressing local community issues;
- career and entrepreneurship workshops co-created with employers;
- service-learning modules supporting vulnerable groups through digital, social or environmental initiatives;
- internship-based CSL, where students connect their professional practice with academic reflection and competence development.

3.2 Designing CSL-based courses

Structuring CSL activities within academic courses

CSL courses in Slovenia typically follow a structured, cyclical process:

1. **Preparation and orientation:** defining the project scope and learning goals;
2. **Collaboration with external partner(s):** identifying real-world problems;
3. **Active engagement:** applying theoretical models in practice;
4. **Reflection and evaluation:** analysing outcomes and personal development.

Example · Management and Communication in Organisations, University of Novo mesto

Students participate in a CSL project aimed at improving internal communication or customer relations for a selected local company or non-profit organisation. The process unfolds in four structured stages:

1. **Preparation and orientation:** the lecturer introduces the theoretical framework of organisational communication and defines project expectations together with the partner organisation.
2. **Collaboration with the partner:** student teams conduct interviews or surveys within the organisation to identify specific communication challenges.
3. **Active engagement:** students design practical solutions, such as communication guidelines, staff workshops or internal feedback tools, and test them in cooperation with the partner.
4. **Reflection and evaluation:** each team submits a report summarising the process, outcomes and lessons learned, followed by a group reflection session linking theory to practice.

Through this structured CSL format, students not only apply communication theories to authentic workplace issues but also strengthen teamwork, analytical reasoning and professional self-awareness.

Incorporating learning outcomes that align with career development

Learning outcomes of CSL-based courses are aligned with national higher education descriptors, focusing on transversal and employability skills. Typical outcomes include the ability to:

- integrate theoretical knowledge with practical problem-solving;
- work collaboratively and communicate effectively in interdisciplinary teams;
- demonstrate responsibility, ethical awareness and social engagement;
- plan and reflect on personal career development;
- apply innovation and entrepreneurial thinking in real contexts.

These competences correspond to the three **ELIX pillars**: career development and lifelong learning, civic engagement, and collaboration and impactful partnerships.

3.3 Teaching strategies for CSL

Problem-Based Learning (PBL) and case studies

Problem-based learning is widely used. Students tackle authentic cases provided by partner organisations and develop strategic or operational solutions. In business-related courses, for instance, they design communication plans, conduct market research or develop improvement proposals for partner institutions. Case studies from local companies and organisations are also used to connect classroom theory with professional practice, encouraging analytical and strategic thinking.

Experiential learning methods (role-playing, simulation, service projects)

Lecturers employ experiential learning techniques to strengthen students' engagement and reflection:

- simulation of career counselling sessions or management meetings, to practise communication and decision-making skills;
- service projects supporting local communities (e.g. intergenerational cooperation, digital literacy training);
- role-playing and peer mentoring within career workshops;
- guest lectures from employers and alumni, followed by reflective analysis of career paths.

Using technology for virtual CSL experiences

Blended and virtual CSL activities have become more frequent since the COVID-19 pandemic. Tools such as MS Teams and Moodle are used to organise virtual cooperation with external partners, online reflection sessions and joint project presentations.

3.4 Effective strategies for CSL experiences that promote career development and lifelong learning

Experience from Slovenian higher education institutions highlights several effective strategies for successful CSL implementation:

- **Institutional support and coordination** through career centres and project offices;
- **integration of CSL into curricula** as credit-bearing activities linked to learning outcomes;
- **partnership development** with local organisations, companies and NGOs to ensure relevance;
- **structured reflection and feedback** as a core component of assessment;
- **recognition of learning through micro-credentials,** validating transversal competences and civic engagement;
- **continuous professional development of teachers,** equipping them with tools to design and facilitate CSL-based learning.

CSL in Slovenia thus contributes to bridging the gap between higher education and the labour market, while simultaneously promoting students' civic responsibility and lifelong learning competences.

PARTNER-COUNTRY PRACTICE

Serbia

In Serbia, Career and Service Learning (CSL) is gradually being introduced within higher education as part of broader efforts to enhance students' employability, civic engagement and lifelong learning competences.

Although CSL is not yet formally embedded in national higher education policies, several universities and vocational colleges have begun integrating community-based and career-oriented projects into their curricula. These initiatives typically connect academic learning with practical experiences in local communities, non-governmental organisations and small or medium-sized enterprises, providing students with meaningful opportunities to apply theoretical knowledge in real-life contexts.

3.1 Models of CSL implementation

Curriculum-based CSL: integrating CSL into courses

Community Service Learning (CSL) can be implemented through various models that align with different educational goals and community needs. Two prominent models are curriculum-based CSL and project-based CSL.

Curriculum-based CSL involves the integration of CSL experiences directly into existing courses. In this model, service activities are intentionally designed to enhance and complement the learning objectives of the course. For instance, a physics course might engage students in a project that addresses energy efficiency in local buildings, linking theoretical concepts of thermodynamics to practical applications. Similarly, a social work course could involve students in community projects that allow better integration of social work theory and practice, as well as improvement of students' competence for self-guided learning. This ensures that students see a clear connection between their academic studies and their service work, reinforcing their understanding of the subject matter while contributing to the community.

One of the most notable examples of CSL implementation in curricula in Serbia is the application of **dual education,** which is present in certain secondary and higher education institutions. In these institutions, students carry out part of their educational activities in real work environments: in local businesses, institutions and organisations. During this practice, they not only acquire professional knowledge and skills, but also work on projects that address specific needs of the local community.

In addition, at some faculties, students participate in projects within mandatory courses, which involve collaboration with local communities, analysing the needs of the population and designing solutions that provide socially beneficial value. These activities are linked to learning outcomes and are evaluated through seminar papers, group presentations or reflective essays.

Example · University of Novi Sad, Department of Biology and Ecology

Students often participate in biodiversity monitoring projects and natural resource protection, in cooperation with local communities and nature parks. These activities are fully integrated into the courses, enabling students to gain practical experience while simultaneously contributing to the preservation of the environment.

Project-based CSL: interdisciplinary collaboration and real-world problem-solving

Project-based CSL emphasises interdisciplinary collaboration and real-world problem-solving. This model often involves students working on complex, multifaceted projects that require them to draw on knowledge and skills from various disciplines. For example, students could address the topic of diffusion and osmosis, because within its scope there are important interdisciplinary correlations between physics, chemistry and biology. These projects promote a holistic approach to problem-solving and encourage students to adapt to different curriculum contents, regardless of the differences between subjects and disciplines. Project-based CSL aligns with the principles of project-based learning, fostering reflective thinking and the application of scientific methods to define, analyse and solve problems. In this approach, students are encouraged to continually move towards acquiring knowledge and skills, according to the levels and sequences of the problem presented in a specific context.

Examples of project-based CSL in Serbia

Pro-VET project (Erasmus+)

Students and teachers from different faculties in Serbia worked on creating digital solutions and improving business processes for local small and medium-sized enterprises. These projects required collaboration among students from different fields, from IT through management to marketing, fostering interdisciplinary competences and a culture of teamwork.

Young Researchers of Serbia

Volunteer camps organised by Young Researchers of Serbia (Mladi istraživači Srbije) bring together students from natural, social and technical sciences to work on environmental protection, revitalisation of public spaces and support for vulnerable groups, through direct interaction with the community, problem identification and joint work on innovative solutions.

Faculty of Architecture, University of Belgrade

Students participate in urban revitalisation projects, collaborating with local communities and authorities to design solutions for improving public spaces. These projects often involve students from urban planning, landscape architecture and sociology.

Faculty of Technical Sciences

IT and design students develop digital solutions for local entrepreneurs and organisations. Students gain practical skills, while local communities benefit from innovative solutions tailored to their specific needs.

3.2 Designing CSL-based courses

Designing effective CSL-based courses involves careful consideration of several key elements to ensure a meaningful and impactful learning experience: structuring CSL activities within academic courses; balancing theory, practice and reflection; and incorporating learning outcomes that align with career development.

Structuring CSL activities within academic courses

When structuring CSL activities within academic courses, it is essential to integrate service experiences that directly relate to the course content. This helps students see the relevance of their academic learning in real-world contexts, enhancing their understanding and retention of the material. Activities should be

designed to promote active learning, critical thinking and problem-solving skills; for example, students might engage in identifying community needs or designing a CSL project. The following strategies can be employed:

- **Course mapping:** identify specific points in the syllabus where CSL activities will take place, including preparatory sessions, engagement activities and debriefing discussions.
- **Project-based learning:** engage students in structured service projects that address real-world issues while meeting academic goals.
- **Partnership development:** establish strong collaborations with community organisations to ensure meaningful service opportunities.
- **Flexible engagement models:** provide options such as short-term service projects, long-term partnerships or embedded service components in coursework.
- **Assessment and feedback:** implement structured evaluations, such as progress reports, peer reviews and community partner feedback, to ensure continuous improvement of CSL activities.

Balancing theory, practice and reflection

Balancing theory, practice and reflection is another crucial aspect of designing CSL-based courses. Theoretical knowledge provides the foundation for understanding the issues addressed through service. Practical application allows students to apply this knowledge in meaningful ways, addressing real community needs. Reflection enables students to connect theory and practice, critically analyse their experiences and deepen their understanding. To achieve this balance, courses should include:

- **Theoretical foundations:** foundational readings and lectures on community engagement, ethics and social responsibility.
- **Hands-on experience:** real-world service activities where students apply theoretical concepts to practical situations.
- **Guided reflection:** structured reflection methods such as journals, discussion boards or reflective essays to encourage critical thinking about the service experience.
- **Faculty facilitation:** professors guide students in connecting their experiences with academic content through discussions and feedback.
- **Integration of case studies:** analysis of case studies related to CSL experiences to deepen theoretical understanding and application.

Incorporating learning outcomes that align with career development

Incorporating learning outcomes that align with career development is vital for preparing students for future employment. CSL experiences can be structured to help students develop skills and competences highly valued by employers, such as teamwork, communication, problem-solving and leadership. By aligning CSL activities with career-related learning outcomes, educators can enhance students' employability. Consider the following approaches:

- **Skill development:** align CSL activities with transferable skills such as leadership, teamwork, communication and problem-solving.
- **Professional exposure:** provide opportunities for students to network with industry professionals, community leaders and organisations.

- **Portfolio and CV building:** encourage students to document their CSL projects in professional portfolios and highlight their experiences in their CVs.
- **Competency-based assessment:** evaluate students based on competences relevant to their career goals, such as project management, research skills and cultural competence.
- **Career reflection:** include career development workshops, mentorship opportunities and career-focused reflections to help students understand how CSL experiences contribute to their professional growth.

3.3 Teaching strategies for CSL

In Serbia, project-based learning (PBL) was formally integrated into the educational system in the 2018/2019 school year, mandating its use in the first cycle of education through 36 classes annually. This initiative was supported by in-service training programmes for teachers and school counsellors, accompanied by manuals and resources. Studies have indicated that PBL positively influences students' knowledge acquisition in the early grades, enhances cooperation and boosts motivation and metacognitive awareness. However, challenges persist, including the inadequate application of information and communication technologies (ICT), insufficient digital competence among teachers and difficulties in formulating effective research questions. Prior to the formal adoption of PBL, the "Trefoil" pedagogical model was developed in Serbia. It emphasised student-led projects to foster initiative, collaboration and creative skills, aligning with the core principles of PBL.

Several case studies can be designed to integrate PBL into CSL:

A

PBL and community issues

Students identify a real-world problem in their local community and collaborate to develop a solution by integrating knowledge from multiple disciplines, for example designing a waste reduction programme for their school and neighbourhood. Experiential learning involves hands-on activities such as conducting surveys, analysing data and implementing pilot projects.

B

Technology-enhanced PBL for CSL

Technology is used to enhance collaboration, research and presentation of PBL projects. Students might create a website or multimedia campaign to raise awareness about a social issue, using digital tools to collect and analyse data. This approach can also facilitate virtual CSL experiences, extending the reach and impact of student projects.

C

Interdisciplinary PBL for social work

Integrating theory and practice to improve students' competence in self-guided learning, students collaborate with a local organisation to develop and implement a programme supporting vulnerable populations. Role-playing and simulations prepare students for real-world interactions and decision-making.

D

Overcoming barriers in PBL implementation

Addressing challenges such as a lack of clear goals, insufficient teacher knowledge and inadequate feedback, this case study could detail how a school implemented a comprehensive teacher training programme focusing on PBL principles, ICT skills and formative assessment. Facilitation processes can encourage teachers to rethink beliefs that have led to the failure of innovation.

E

Measuring the impact of PBL on student outcomes

This case study could assess the effects of PBL on student knowledge, skills, motivation and engagement, comparing the academic achievement and critical thinking of students in PBL-based CSL projects with those taught through traditional methods. Self-reflection, self-evaluation and peer evaluation can be used to track progress and provide feedback.

F

Promoting metacognitive skills

A project could concentrate on developing students' metacognitive abilities through PBL, for example a project where students reflect on and improve their own project, enhancing their self-awareness and learning strategies.

3.4 Effective strategies for CSL experiences that promote career development and lifelong learning

To design effective CSL experiences that boost career development and promote lifelong learning, several key strategies can be implemented, drawing on educational research and pedagogical approaches.

1 Centre CSL projects on real-world problem-solving

By emphasising the direct relevance of projects to challenges students might face in their future careers, CSL becomes a practical training ground. Framing CSL as a means to tackle realistic problems allows students to grapple with the kinds of decisions and dilemmas encountered in professional settings, ensuring that learning is contextual and immediately applicable.

2 Foster self-directed learning

Encouraging students to take ownership of their learning process promotes deeper engagement and retention. With teachers acting as coaches, offering guidance and suggestions without prescribing rigid activities, students are empowered to pursue their own solutions. This enhances their ability to apply knowledge and strategies to new, unfamiliar situations, a skill essential for lifelong learning.

3 Develop skills in criticism and creativity

By requiring students to critically evaluate information and devise creative solutions, CSL experiences can enhance cognitive flexibility. The ability to recognise connections among different subjects, coupled with critically verifying new problem solutions, improves overall problem-solving efficiency.

4 Build in reflection and self-evaluation

Techniques for self-reflection, self-evaluation and peer assessment ensure that both students and teachers monitor the learning process and identify evidence of progress. This metacognitive approach helps students understand their strengths and areas for improvement, fostering a growth mindset.

5 Take an interdisciplinary approach

Designing projects that span multiple disciplines encourages students to adopt a holistic perspective in problem-solving. By integrating diverse fields of knowledge, students learn to appreciate the interconnectedness of real-world issues, preparing them for complex, multifaceted challenges in their careers.

6 Integrate technology

Technology provides access to data, enables information visualisation, facilitates collaboration and supports the development of multimedia documents. This enhances the learning experience and equips students with essential digital skills for the modern workplace.

Serbia case · Boosting creativity through geography teaching

Geography teaching offers a unique avenue for boosting student creativity. **Problem-based teaching** is central to this, as geography naturally lends itself to numerous problem situations that can stimulate creative thinking. This method encourages students to discover novel solutions through thinking activities organised in diverse combinations, fostering the development of creative abilities and individual thought processes. Problem-solving in geography entails acquiring new knowledge, linking it with existing understanding and verifying solutions, which collectively enhances students' cognitive skills.

To further enhance creativity, geography teaching should emphasise **metacognitive processes.** Educators can prompt students to engage in independent thought by posing metacognitive questions that encourage reflection on their reasoning, assumptions and existing knowledge. Such strategies significantly boost metacognition, the ability to think about one's own thinking. Solving problems in geography also cultivates persistence, independence and tenacity, along with creative, logical and critical thinking skills.

The **Hill-Slater model** can also be beneficial. It employs questions designed to provoke curiosity and direct students towards the subject matter, serving as triggers for creative problem-solving. By presenting problem situations that evoke wonderment, teachers can spark the curiosity that is crucial for initiating thinking processes and comprehension.

Media integration is another vital component of modern geography teaching. Using resources like the internet allows students to independently collect data, honing their data selection skills and enabling them to creatively analyse information, reduce complexity and identify the details most pertinent to problem-solving.

Finally, **teamwork and engagement** can be promoted through team or group work based on social situations. This kind of social support can extend students' capabilities beyond their current limits. Open tasks allow students to solve problems in different ways, offer different solutions or design a new approach to reach a solution; the most open tasks engage the highest thought processes.

PARTNER-COUNTRY PRACTICE

Slovakia

In Slovakia, the integration of Career and Service Learning (CSL) into higher education is an emerging practice aligned with national strategies promoting innovation, employability and social responsibility in university curricula.

While CSL is not yet a standardised approach, several universities have started experimenting with project-based and community-engaged learning, often linked to internships, volunteering and regional development initiatives. These activities provide students with opportunities to connect theoretical knowledge with real-world applications, strengthen cooperation between academia and local stakeholders, and develop transversal competences essential for lifelong learning and career development.

3.1 Models of CSL implementation

Curriculum-based CSL: integrating CSL into courses

In Slovakia, several universities have implemented the Career Service Learning and Community Service Learning (CSL) concept, allowing students to apply theoretical knowledge in practice while contributing to addressing real community needs.

University of Economics in Bratislava (EUBA)

EUBA has a highly developed collaboration with the professional sphere, achieved through lectures, selected seminars and a dedicated course, “Entrepreneurship in Practice”. Students have the opportunity to access valuable real-world information, partnerships and internships. Engaging students in real projects enhances their analytical, creative and communication skills while providing them with practical experience during their studies.

The curriculum-based CSL model is integrated into academic courses as part of the curriculum. Students participate in community projects within their coursework, bridging theory with practice. The assessment includes CSL methodology, where students analyse their experiences and learn from feedback. The advantage of this model is its direct integration into education, helping students better understand theory through practice. Its drawback is its time limitation: at EUBA it is restricted to a single semester, reducing flexibility as it must align with the course content.

While specific subjects such as Business Coaching, Team Coaching and sustainability courses are being implemented, there is a recognised need to provide students with opportunities to participate in workshops from their first year onwards. These workshops should focus on self-discovery, career guidance and the development of soft skills.

There is further potential in intensifying and linking cooperation between centres that already operate within the university: the career centre, the mentoring and coaching centre, and the lifelong learning centre. The goal is to create an accredited programme under the auspices of the lifelong learning centre, accessible to students and the general public interested in developing career skills, including soft skills and employability skills.

In the area of developing social responsibility, there is room for improvement and an opportunity to involve NGOs in cooperation. This can be done through expert lectures, workshops and the "Entrepreneurship in Practice" course, where students would work on a specific project for selected NGOs, contributing to social responsibility and developing their personal and career skills.

Examples of activities

- Developing strategies, marketing plans and campaigns for companies.
- Creating marketing strategies for small and medium enterprises, such as a comprehensive strategy for a local coffee and health supplements producer, including social media campaigns.
- Crafting marketing strategies for non-profit organisations.

Project-based CSL: interdisciplinary collaboration and real-world problem-solving

The project-based CSL model is interdisciplinary and focuses on solving real community problems. It is not tied to a specific academic course but is rather a collaboration between the university and the community. At EUBA, CSL is voluntary or organised within specific projects. This model allows for longer project durations, spanning multiple semesters. Its main advantage is interdisciplinary collaboration, where students from different fields work together on solutions.

Examples of activities

- Supporting the development of student start-ups and future entrepreneurs.
- Engaging students in volunteer activities (e.g. the "Our City" initiative).

Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica (UMB)

UMB is one of the pioneers in implementing curriculum-based CSL in Slovakia. In various courses, students combine theoretical education with practical community activities.

- Social work students collaborate with local non-profits on social inclusion projects.
- Environmental studies students undertake projects aimed at improving the local environment.

University of Prešov

The Faculty of Arts has implemented a project-based CSL model to connect theoretical education with practical and community needs.

- Education students design and implement educational programmes for marginalised children.
- Psychology students provide support in local senior centres.

3.2 Designing CSL-based courses

Structuring CSL activities within academic courses

Courses are developed through mutual agreements between companies/NGOs and course guarantors. The collaboration involves designing a curriculum where lecturers (theory) and company/NGO representatives (practice) alternate. In the first week, the company/NGO is introduced and semester tasks are assigned. Students work in teams throughout the semester with guidance from company

representatives and teachers. The semester concludes with final presentations, typically held at the company, with a panel of teachers and company representatives. Students receive feedback, and the best-performing students may be offered internships.

Structure of Problem-Based Learning (PBL) in economic, marketing and management topics

1. Preparation and presentation of assignments (problem definition and setting objectives with a mentor)
2. Team formation and teambuilding
3. Developing a plan (goals, activities, schedule, milestones, target groups)
4. Brainstorming and self-study
5. Implementation and evaluation of milestones
6. Validation of proposed solutions in practice
7. Mid-term and final presentations
8. Skill assessment
9. Final documentation of outputs

3.3 Teaching strategies for CSL

Problem-Based Learning (PBL) and case studies

Through PBL, students learn by solving real problems, developing analytical thinking, collaboration, innovation and the key competences known as the “4Cs”:

C
Critical thinking
Problem-solving skills.

C
Creativity
Encouraging out-of-the-box thinking.

C
Collaboration
Teamwork for achieving common goals.

C
Communication
Conveying ideas effectively.

CSL supporting tools

Tool	Purpose
Belbin Test	Effective team role distribution.
Systems Thinking	Strategic and long-term planning.
Design Thinking	User-centred problem-solving through iterative processes and feedback. Stages: Empathise, Define, Ideate, Prototype, Test.
Lean Startup Method	Rapid testing of business ideas with minimal costs. Stages: Build, Measure, Learn.
Open Space Technology	Participants propose discussion topics and self-organise into groups.
OCTO presentation evaluation	**Originality:** approach to problem-solving and knowledge of existing solutions. **Creativity:** depth of analysis and inclusion of all relevant aspects. **Teamwork and methodological accuracy:** cohesion, task distribution and adherence to agreed methods. **Outputs:** quality and timeliness of presentations and supplementary materials (photos, videos, reports, articles, etc.).

3.4 Effective strategies for CSL experiences that promote career development and lifelong learning

1 SARIO: Practice for Universities, Solutions for Companies

The Slovak Investment and Trade Development Agency (SARIO) implements the "Practice for Universities, Solutions for Companies" project, aiming to foster collaboration between academia and the business sector. SARIO connects companies with universities and research institutions, creating partnerships and opportunities for students to gain practical experience. Companies can submit topics and projects, which are then matched with appropriate faculties. SARIO organises matchmaking events where company representatives meet academics and students to establish direct cooperation. All these services are provided free of charge.

2 Dual education system

In Slovakia, the dual education system is a model of vocational education that closely integrates theoretical instruction at secondary vocational schools with practical training at employers' premises. Students sign apprenticeship contracts with employers, where they undergo practical training at the company's workplace. This allows students to acquire real work experience and develop work habits during their studies, enhancing their employability, while employers can train future qualified workers according to their needs.

3 TREXIMA: EU project on developing youth competences

TREXIMA is involved in projects aimed at developing the competences of young people in line with labour market requirements. Through various initiatives and research activities, it seeks to identify and promote the development of skills crucial for the successful employment of young people. These projects often involve collaboration with European partners and are funded by the European Union.

4 Collaboration between companies and EUBA

- **DELL and the Faculty of Economics and Finance at EUBA:** DELL collaborates with the faculty in the field of finance, offering students practical projects, internships and workshops organised by the company. This partnership enables students to apply theoretical knowledge in a real corporate environment and gain valuable experience for their future careers.
- **Lidl Retail Academy:** through its Retail Academy, the retail chain Lidl offers students internships and educational programmes focused on the retail sector. Students gain insights into retail operations, develop managerial skills and prepare for potential career opportunities within the company.

5 Course "Entrepreneurship in Practice", Faculty of Commerce, EUBA

The course focuses on linking theoretical knowledge with practical experience. Students work on real entrepreneurial projects, collaborate with companies and acquire the practical skills necessary for successful entrepreneurship. This approach fosters entrepreneurial thinking and prepares students for the challenges of the real business environment.

6 EUBA Career Centre (CC EUBA)

The Career Centre of the University of Economics in Bratislava serves as a mediation and counselling hub for the practical application of EUBA graduates. Its mission is to help students prepare for their entry into the labour market during their studies and to support their relationship with the university. The centre creates a link between academia and employers, facilitating communication and offering services such as job offers, part-time jobs, internships, competitions and study abroad programmes.

7 Job fairs organised by CC EUBA

Twice a year, CC EUBA organises job fairs: "Career Journey" in the autumn and "Alumni Day" in the spring. These fairs give companies direct contact to mediate job opportunities, recommendations and consultations with graduates and current EUBA students. Companies can directly address future graduates and students during the regular teaching process. Both Slovak and international companies participate every year. These initiatives represent significant connections between academia and practice, contributing to more effective education and better employability of graduates.

8 The InQ Startup Incubator

The InQ Startup Incubator is operated by STU (Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava), with EUBA recently joining the initiative to support innovative start-ups by combining business and technology expertise. EUBA provides marketers, business strategists and financial experts, while STU contributes technical talent, engineers and developers to support product development. The incubator offers mentorship, co-working spaces, workshops and investor networking to help early-stage start-ups grow and scale. Through hackathons, bootcamps and acceleration programmes, students from both universities collaborate to turn innovative ideas into market-ready solutions.

9 Summer school: International Business Consulting Program

The International Business Consulting Program (IBCP) at EUBA offers a unique opportunity to work in an international team with students from the University of Wisconsin – La Crosse, USA, on real consulting projects assigned by successful international companies operating in Slovakia. In previous editions, participating companies included Covestro, IBM, ING, TPA, Johnson Controls, Lenovo, Slovak Telecom, Soitron, Siemens, Dell, O2 Slovakia, Creatix and the US Embassy.

10 Students as volunteers at a one-day event

The Naše Mesto event connects businesses, local governments and the non-governmental sector to clean, beautify and visibly improve cities. EUBA collaborates on this project with Nadácia Pontis, which works to transform Slovakia into a place for free and responsible individuals who strive to improve their lives and surroundings. As part of the initiative, students volunteer for one day each year in a selected institution.

PARTNER-COUNTRY PRACTICE

Greece

In Greece, micro-credentials are still in the early stages of implementation, yet they are increasingly recognised within the framework of lifelong learning and professional development.

Universities have started exploring modular and skills-based learning units that can be certified as micro-credentials, particularly in fields that promote employability and social engagement. Within this context, Community and Career Service Learning (CSL) is viewed as a complementary pedagogical strategy that enhances students' transversal competences, civic awareness and readiness for the labour market.

3.1 Models of CSL implementation

Curriculum-based CSL: integrating CSL into courses

Greek universities have begun integrating CSL activities within formal academic courses, especially those related to education, social sciences and humanities. A prominent example is the Teaching Practicum course offered at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, where CSL principles are embedded into students' teaching practice, connecting pedagogical theory with real-world application.

Within this practicum, students collaborate with community-based language programmes to design and deliver English lessons tailored to learners' needs. The CSL experience includes lesson planning, class observation, peer teaching and reflective reporting. This model demonstrates how academic knowledge, professional practice and social contribution can be interwoven into a single credit-bearing course.

Project-based CSL: interdisciplinary collaboration and real-world problem-solving

CSL implementation in Greece also extends to project-based formats that involve collaboration with local organisations, NGOs and educational centres. Such projects focus on language education, cultural inclusion and social innovation. Examples include:

- **community English teaching initiatives,** where students develop lesson plans and micro-teaching sessions for marginalised groups;
- **educational outreach projects** promoting literacy and intercultural dialogue;
- **collaborations with non-profit institutions** aimed at supporting refugees and migrants through education and integration programmes.

These activities encourage students to apply their disciplinary knowledge in community contexts, fostering a sense of civic responsibility and practical skill development.

3.2 Designing CSL-based courses

Structuring CSL activities within academic courses

The Greek approach to CSL emphasises a structured process combining experiential learning, reflection and assessment. The integration of CSL within the Teaching Practicum course follows a four-stage cycle:

1. **Preparation and orientation:** students are introduced to CSL theory, project objectives and ethical guidelines.
2. **Community collaboration:** students engage with community learners through class observation and interaction to identify specific educational needs.
3. **Active engagement:** each student designs and delivers a 15-minute micro-teaching session within the community class, observed by peers and instructors.
4. **Reflection and evaluation:** students submit reflective essays, lesson plans, observation reports and video recordings of their teaching performance, which together contribute 30% of the course grade.

This structured model combines experiential learning with reflective practice, ensuring that students not only acquire teaching experience but also develop metacognitive and social competences.

Balancing theory, practice and reflection

CSL activities are carefully balanced to maintain academic rigour while promoting hands-on engagement. The practicum integrates educational theory (lesson planning, learning psychology, assessment methods) with practical teaching and guided reflection. Students document their progress through reflective essays and debriefing discussions, allowing them to link theoretical insights with lived teaching experiences.

Incorporating learning outcomes that align with career development

CSL in Greece supports key employability and professional competences such as:

- effective communication and intercultural sensitivity;
- collaborative problem-solving and teamwork;
- self-evaluation and reflective thinking;
- ethical and civic awareness in educational practice.

Through these outcomes, CSL contributes directly to career preparation and lifelong learning, helping students transition from academic study to professional and civic engagement.

3.3 Teaching strategies for CSL

Problem-Based Learning (PBL) and case studies

In teacher education, PBL and case study methods are used to simulate classroom challenges and decision-making scenarios. Students analyse real teaching cases, develop lesson plans in response to observed needs and evaluate the impact of their interventions.

Experiential learning methods (role-playing, simulation, service projects)

Experiential learning is central to CSL in Greek universities. Methods include:

- micro-teaching sessions conducted in authentic community settings;
- peer feedback and video analysis to enhance self-reflection;
- collaborative teaching projects that simulate real classroom dynamics;
- community service initiatives, linking pedagogical knowledge with civic contribution.

- **Using technology for virtual CSL experiences**

Virtual CSL components are used to extend accessibility. Digital tools (e.g. MS Teams, Moodle and video conferencing) support remote teaching, peer review and reflective discussions. These blended models enable CSL to continue even when in-person engagement is limited, ensuring continuity and inclusiveness.

3.4 Effective strategies for CSL experiences that promote career development and lifelong learning

The Greek experience shows that successful CSL integration depends on:

- **institutional support** for community partnerships and course redesign;
- **clear alignment** between CSL objectives and course learning outcomes;
- **structured reflection tools,** such as guided journals and debriefing sessions;
- **partnerships with local communities and NGOs,** ensuring authentic engagement;
- **ongoing evaluation** of student impact on both learning and community development;
- **potential recognition through micro-credentials,** supporting lifelong learning and employability.

Overall, CSL in Greece enhances the connection between higher education and society, empowering students to act as reflective practitioners, socially responsible citizens and adaptable professionals.

4

CHAPTER 4

Practical resources and tools for educators

4.1 Lesson plans and teaching modules

4.2 Student reflection and career planning resources

Co-funded by the European Union

4.1 Lesson plans and teaching modules

EXAMPLE FROM

Serbia

These modules integrate problem-based learning (PBL) and project-based learning (PjBL) strategies within a Community Service Learning framework, incorporating elements that foster creativity, critical thinking and the practical application of knowledge.

Module 1 · Identifying community needs

Objective: students identify and define a pressing need in their local community, a crucial step of statistical analysis.

1. **Brainstorming session:** begin with a class discussion about the concept of community needs and potential issues that students have observed.
2. **Community walk:** organise a structured walk in the local area, during which students take notes on potential problems such as environmental issues, social disparities or infrastructure concerns.
3. **Data collection:** students conduct brief surveys or interviews with community members to gather first-hand information about their concerns and needs, collecting data independently.
4. **Problem definition:** based on the data collected, each student or group defines a specific problem, which involves understanding the relationship between two phenomena.
5. **Presentation:** students present their identified community needs to the class, explaining the problem and its impact.

Module 2 · Designing a CSL project

Objective: students design a CSL project aimed at addressing the identified community need, incorporating elements of project-based learning.

1. **Goal setting:** clearly define the goals of the project, ensuring they align with the identified community need, using specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound (SMART) objectives.
2. **Task division:** divide the project into smaller, manageable tasks and allocate roles to team members, fostering teamwork and engagement.
3. **Method selection:** students select appropriate methods for addressing the problem, such as awareness campaigns, direct service or policy advocacy. The selection of methods should promote active learning.
4. **Resource planning:** identify and plan the resources needed for the project, including materials, funding and community partnerships. Proper planning of resources is an essential component of the project.
5. **Timeline development:** create a detailed timeline outlining key milestones and deadlines. Time management is a critical skill learned in this process.

Module 3 · Implementation and action

Objective: students implement their CSL project in the community, applying their knowledge and skills to address the identified need.

1. **Project execution:** students carry out the planned activities, adhering to the project timeline and resource allocation.
2. **Community engagement:** engage with community members, stakeholders and partners to ensure the project is well received and effective.
3. **Data collection:** collect data on the project's progress and impact through surveys, observations and interviews.
4. **Problem-solving:** address any challenges or obstacles that arise during implementation, fostering critical thinking and adaptability.
5. **Documentation:** keep a detailed record of all activities, interactions and outcomes, which allows students to think independently.

Module 4 · Reflection and evaluation

Objective: students reflect on their CSL experience and evaluate the project's impact on the community and on their own learning and development.

1. **Self-reflection:** students write reflection papers discussing their experiences, what they learned and how the project influenced their perspectives and skills.
2. **Peer evaluation:** conduct peer reviews to provide feedback on each team member's contributions and performance.
3. **Community feedback:** gather feedback from community members and partners to assess the project's impact and effectiveness.
4. **Impact analysis:** analyse the data collected to determine the project's outcomes and whether the objectives were met.
5. **Presentation:** students present their project findings, reflections and recommendations to the class and community stakeholders.

Case studies demonstrating CSL initiatives

The following illustrative case studies show how the principles and strategies discussed above can be applied in practice.

Case study	Community need	CSL initiative	Outcomes
1 · Environmental sustainability project	A local community experiences high levels of pollution due to improper waste disposal.	Students design and implement a waste reduction and recycling programme in collaboration with local businesses and residents. They conduct awareness campaigns, organise clean-up events and establish recycling stations. The goal is to deepen students' knowledge, build their research skills, encourage cooperative relationships with others, develop higher thought processes and gain authentic experiences.	Reduced pollution levels, increased community awareness of environmental issues and enhanced student understanding of sustainability principles.
2 · Education support programme	Elementary school students in a low-income neighbourhood are struggling with reading proficiency.	High school students create and run an after-school tutoring programme, providing personalised reading support and mentorship to younger students, taking on the role of coordinators.	Improved reading skills among elementary students, increased high school student engagement in community service and enhanced understanding of educational disparities.
3 · Public health awareness campaign	A rise in preventable diseases due to a lack of health education in a rural community.	Medical students design and implement a public health awareness campaign, conducting workshops, distributing informational materials and providing basic health screenings, allowing them to associate theory and practice.	Increased awareness of health issues, adoption of healthier behaviours and enhanced communication and clinical skills among medical students.

By integrating these lesson plans, teaching modules and case studies, educators can create CSL experiences that not only address community needs but also promote career development and lifelong learning, equipping students with essential skills and knowledge for their future paths.

EXAMPLE FROM

Slovenia

The Marketing course, designed with an integrated Community Service Learning (CSL) approach, is an innovative and experiential teaching method that connects academic knowledge with real-world community engagement. The purpose of this integration is to enable students to apply theoretical marketing concepts to concrete challenges faced by local organisations, developing their professional, personal and social responsibility competences.

By collaborating with non-governmental organisations, social enterprises and local entrepreneurs, students gain insight into real market dynamics and the importance of sustainable and ethical marketing practices. The CSL approach promotes reflective learning, teamwork and active citizenship, as students, guided by academic and organisational mentors, contribute to community development while gaining valuable professional experience.

Integrating CSL into the Marketing course not only enhances the pedagogical value of the learning process but also creates opportunities for socially beneficial innovation and strengthens connections between higher education institutions and their social and economic environment.

COURSE SYLLABUS

Marketing with a CSL approach

Community Service Learning: learning through community engagement

COURSE TITLE	LEVEL OF STUDY	ECTS CREDITS
Marketing	Undergraduate	5

Course description and connection to CSL

The course enables students to understand fundamental marketing concepts, including consumer analysis, marketing strategies, digital marketing and socially responsible marketing. Students collaborate with local non-governmental organisations (NGOs), social enterprises or small businesses in need of marketing support. Through this, they:

- apply theoretical knowledge in real-world situations;
- develop socially responsible marketing strategies;
- contribute to the development of the local community with practical solutions.

Course objectives

Upon successful completion of the course, students will:

- understand the importance of marketing in various contexts, including the NGO and socially responsible sectors;
- design and implement marketing strategies for selected organisations;
- gain hands-on experience working with organisations and target groups;
- develop critical thinking and analytical skills in solving marketing challenges;
- improve teamwork, project management and reflective thinking abilities.

Teaching methods

- Lectures (theoretical foundations of marketing, marketing strategies, digital marketing)
- Collaboration with organisations (needs assessment, solution development)
- Workshops and case studies (analysis of marketing campaigns)
- Reflective journal (personal analysis of experiences)
- Final project presentation

Format and duration of CSL activities

Total CSL hours: 30 (15 hours in the field + 15 hours of planning and reflection)

Participating organisations:

- NGOs (need to increase visibility)
- Social enterprises (sustainable marketing strategies)
- Micro-enterprises and start-ups (digital campaigns, social media)

Types of tasks: market and target group analysis; development of a marketing strategy; implementation of a digital campaign; evaluation of performance and suggestions for improvement.

SAMPLE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Week	Activities
1–2	Introduction to the course and CSL, explanation of objectives, presentation of organisations
3–4	Formation of student groups, market and competition analysis
5–6	Development of marketing strategies, preparation of action plans
7–10	Execution of activities in collaboration with organisations
11–12	Monitoring results and adjusting strategies
13–14	Project conclusion, reflection and evaluation
15	Final presentation of results and discussion

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

Assessment element	Weight
Active participation and involvement in CSL	30%
Quality of implemented marketing solutions	30%
Reflective journal	20%
Final project presentation	20%

Mode of reflection

- A reflective journal (what they learned, challenges faced)
- Group discussions (sharing experiences and constructive feedback)
- Feedback from mentors and organisations (evaluation of collaboration and results)

Connection to competences

Professional competences

Understanding of marketing strategies, digital marketing and socially responsible marketing.

Soft skills

Client communication, teamwork, problem-solving.

Social responsibility

Development of marketing solutions that consider sustainable and ethical aspects.

Literature and resources

Required reading

- Kotler, P., Armstrong, G. (2022). *Principles of Marketing.* Pearson.
- Kotler, P., Lee, N. (2020). *Social Marketing: Influencing Behaviors for Good.* SAGE.
- Dibb, S., Simkin, L. (2016). *Marketing: Concepts and Strategies.* Cengage.

Additional resources

- Articles on sustainable marketing and digital campaigns
- Online resources on best practices in NGO marketing

Final remarks. With this syllabus, Marketing students gain practical experience in real-world settings, develop future-ready competences and contribute to their local community. CSL enables them to transfer academic knowledge into practice and become socially responsible marketers.

4.2 Student reflection and career planning resources

To enhance the learning impact of the CSL experience, students are provided with structured resources and guidance to support personal reflection and career development. These resources help students connect their community engagement experience with their academic learning and future professional goals.

1. Reflection guides

Structured reflection prompts and templates help students analyse their CSL experiences. Students are encouraged to reflect on:

- the skills and competences developed through community engagement;
- the impact of their work on partner organisations and the wider community;
- personal insights, challenges faced and lessons learned for future professional growth.

TEMPLATE

Reflection guide

Course	Marketing with a CSL approach
Student name	
Organisation	
Project title	
Date	

1 Context and description (What?)

- Briefly describe the organisation you collaborated with and its main purpose.
- What was your role and what were your key responsibilities in the project?
- What were the main objectives of your CSL activity?

Write 1–2 paragraphs (approx. 150–200 words).

2 Analysis and interpretation (So what?)

- What marketing knowledge and skills did you apply in this project?
- What challenges did you face, and how did you overcome them?
- How did this experience help you understand marketing concepts (e.g. target group analysis, marketing mix, social responsibility)?
- What have you learned about teamwork, communication or problem-solving?

Write 2–3 paragraphs (approx. 300–400 words).

3 Personal and professional impact (Now what?)

- How has this experience influenced your view of marketing as a profession?
- Which personal and professional competences have you strengthened?
- What would you do differently in a similar future project?
- How will this experience inform your future career choices and learning goals?

Write 2–3 paragraphs (approx. 300–400 words).

4 Reflection prompts (optional: choose one or two to expand on)

- What moment or insight was most meaningful to you during this experience?
- What did you learn about yourself as a learner or as a team member?
- How did your contribution make a difference to the organisation or community?

5 Summary

- Summarise your key takeaways from this CSL experience.
- State in one sentence what you will carry forward into your future studies or career.

Write 1 short paragraph (approx. 100–150 words).

6 Evaluation criteria

Your reflection will be assessed based on:

- depth of reflection and analysis (not only description);
- connection to theoretical marketing concepts;
- demonstrated personal and professional growth;
- clarity, structure and writing quality.

2. Career planning worksheets and self-assessment tools

Students use tailored worksheets to identify transferable skills gained during CSL activities, such as communication, teamwork, project management and ethical decision-making. Self-assessment tools help them recognise strengths, areas for improvement and the alignment between their values and career aspirations.

3. Strategies for developing lifelong career skills

Workshops and individual consultations guide students in transforming their CSL experiences into actionable career plans. The focus is on:

- integrating community-based learning into career narratives (e.g. CVs, interviews);
- building professional networks through collaboration with community partners;
- developing a mindset of continuous learning, adaptability and social responsibility in their future careers.

5

CHAPTER 5

Assessment and evaluation of CSL integration

5.1 Measuring the impact of CSL on student learning

5.2 Institutional assessment and continuous improvement

5.3 Practical tools and examples for CSL assessment

Co-funded by the European Union

Effective assessment and evaluation are key to ensuring that Community and Career Service Learning (CSL) achieves its dual purpose: enhancing student learning and contributing to community development.

Assessment in CSL should therefore measure academic achievement, professional competence and civic engagement, while institutional evaluation ensures the sustainability and continuous improvement of CSL practices.

5.1 Measuring the impact of CSL on student learning

Templates for designing CSL assessments and student evaluations

Assessment in CSL should combine performance-based, reflective and formative approaches. A comprehensive template typically includes:

1

Pre-CSL assessment

Identifying students' initial expectations, competences and motivation.

2

During-CSL assessment

Monitoring engagement and problem-solving through journals, project deliverables or peer evaluations.

3

Post-CSL assessment

Evaluating learning outcomes through reports, presentations and reflective essays.

These templates help ensure that assessment aligns with both course learning outcomes and CSL principles such as reflection, community relevance and experiential learning.

Tools for assessing career readiness and employability skills

To measure how CSL contributes to career development, institutions can use:

- **Competence self-assessment rubrics,** aligned with the European Skills Agenda (communication, collaboration, problem-solving, entrepreneurship, ethical awareness);
- **career readiness scales** adapted from frameworks like the NACE Career Readiness Competencies;
- **reflective career portfolios,** where students document skills gained through CSL projects (e.g. leadership, adaptability, intercultural understanding).

Such tools encourage students to articulate transferable competences and demonstrate how experiential learning supports employability.

Student feedback surveys and evaluation methods

Student feedback is central to evaluating CSL impact. Universities may apply:

- **Structured surveys** (Likert scale plus open-ended questions) assessing perceived learning, civic engagement and satisfaction with partner collaboration;
- **focus groups or reflection circles** to capture deeper insights into student experiences;
- **peer and mentor evaluations** to triangulate feedback from multiple perspectives.

Data from these instruments provide evidence for improving CSL course design and teaching practices.

Tracking long-term benefits of CSL experiences

To assess the sustainability and long-term outcomes of CSL, institutions can establish mechanisms for longitudinal tracking, such as:

- **graduate follow-up surveys** measuring employment, civic participation and continued learning;
- **alumni interviews** exploring how CSL experiences shaped career choices or community involvement;
- **digital CSL portfolios or badges** documenting achievements over time.

This longitudinal perspective helps institutions demonstrate the broader social and professional impact of CSL beyond immediate academic outcomes.

5.2 Institutional assessment and continuous improvement

Benchmarking CSL implementation in higher education institutions

Benchmarking allows universities to compare their CSL integration with national or international best practices. Key indicators may include:

The number of CSL-integrated courses and disciplines involved	Partnerships established with community or industry organisations	The percentage of students engaged in CSL activities	Systems for assessing reflection and civic engagement

Such benchmarking supports institutional recognition, accreditation processes and the strategic development of CSL initiatives.

Strategies for gathering stakeholder feedback

Continuous improvement relies on systematic input from all CSL stakeholders:

- **Students and teachers:** through evaluations, reflective sessions and academic boards;
- **community partners:** via satisfaction surveys, partnership review meetings or co-evaluation workshops;
- **employers and alumni:** providing insights into the relevance of CSL competences for the labour market.

This multi-perspective feedback ensures that CSL remains responsive, inclusive and socially relevant.

Recommendations for scaling up CSL initiatives

To institutionalise CSL effectively, universities should:

1. **Embed CSL into strategic documents and curricula,** linking it to quality assurance processes;
2. **develop institutional frameworks for recognising CSL outcomes** (credits, certificates or micro-credentials);
3. **provide teacher training and professional support** for CSL course design and assessment;
4. **foster cross-sector partnerships** to expand the range of CSL opportunities;

5 **share good practices and case studies** through inter-university networks and publications.

Systematic assessment and evaluation transform CSL from isolated initiatives into an **integrated, evidence-based practice** that strengthens both student learning and societal impact.

5.3 Practical tools and examples for CSL assessment

1. Student reflective journal template

Used before, during and after the CSL activity. Purpose: to guide students in connecting theory, practice and personal growth during their CSL experience.

Reflection phase	Guiding questions	Evidence / notes
Before CSL	What are my expectations from this CSL project? Which competences do I want to strengthen? How does this experience relate to my academic or career goals?	
During CSL	What challenges am I encountering while working with the community/organisation? How am I applying theoretical concepts in practice? What am I learning about teamwork, communication and social responsibility?	
After CSL	How has this experience changed my understanding of the subject? Which professional and personal skills have I developed? How will I use this learning in my future studies or career?	
Overall reflection	What does "career and service learning" mean to me now? How did I contribute to the community and what did I receive in return?	

Submission format: short written journal (2–3 pages) or multimedia reflection (video/audio presentation).

2. Rubric for assessing CSL competences

For lecturers and mentors.

Competence area	Indicators	Rating scale (1–5)	Comments
Knowledge integration	Applies theoretical knowledge to real-world challenges; links academic content with practice.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5	
Problem solving and critical thinking	Demonstrates analytical reasoning; identifies innovative or feasible solutions.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5	

Competence area	Indicators	Rating scale (1–5)	Comments
Teamwork and collaboration	Works effectively with peers and community partners; contributes actively to shared goals.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5	
Communication skills	Communicates clearly, respectfully and professionally with diverse audiences.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5	
Civic and ethical awareness	Shows understanding of social responsibility, ethical implications and community needs.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5	
Reflection and self-awareness	Critically reflects on learning process, strengths and areas for improvement.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5	
Career development	Identifies and articulates transferable skills gained; relates them to future career goals.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5	

25–30
Excellent integration of CSL competences

18–24
Good development, reflective awareness evident

10–17
Basic application, further guidance needed

<10
Limited engagement with CSL learning goals

3. Student feedback questionnaire on CSL experience

Anonymous post-CSL survey (Likert scale plus open-ended questions).

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Section A · General perceptions					
1. The CSL activity was clearly connected to the course objectives.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. The community or partner organisation was relevant to my field of study.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. The project allowed me to apply theory in practice.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. I developed skills that are useful for my career.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. Reflection activities helped me understand what I learned.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Section B · Personal and professional growth					
6. I improved my teamwork and communication abilities.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. I became more aware of social and ethical issues.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. The experience enhanced my self-confidence and problem-solving skills.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

SECTION C · OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

9 What was the most valuable aspect of your CSL experience?

10 What challenges did you encounter and how did you address them?

11 How could the CSL component be improved in the future?

4. Institutional CSL evaluation template

For university coordinators and quality assurance offices.

Evaluation area	Indicators	Data sources	Frequency	Responsible unit
Course integration	Number of courses with CSL components; ECTS assigned	Curriculum database, course syllabi	Annually	Academic Affairs Office
Student engagement	% of students involved in CSL projects	Student records, project reports	Each semester	Career/Service Learning Centre
Community partnerships	Number and diversity of active partners; satisfaction levels	Partner feedback forms, MoUs	Annually	External Relations Office
Faculty involvement	Number of trained instructors; peer sharing practices	Training records, teaching portfolios	Annually	Teaching Development Unit
Impact assessment	Graduate employability, civic engagement indicators	Alumni surveys, tracer studies	Every 2 years	Institutional Research Office
Continuous improvement	Implementation of recommendations from evaluations	Quality assurance reports	Annually	CSL Steering Committee

5. Examples of data collection and reporting tools

CSL Impact Dashboard

Tracks student participation, community hours and feedback scores.

Digital Reflection Repository

Platform for uploading reflective journals and video reflections.

CSL Annual Report Template

Summarises outcomes, key findings, best practices and improvement plans.

Community Partner Satisfaction Survey

5-point scale questions on collaboration quality, student professionalism and project impact.

6. Recommended evaluation cycle for CSL implementation

Phase	Activity	Output
1 · Planning	Define goals, expected outcomes and indicators	CSL evaluation framework
2 · Data collection	Surveys, reflections, rubrics, partner feedback	Quantitative and qualitative data
3 · Analysis	Identify trends, success factors and improvement needs	Summary report
4 · Action	Adjust curriculum, enhance partnerships, update reflection tools	Improvement plan
5 · Communication	Share findings with faculty, partners and students	Annual CSL Impact Report

KEY PRINCIPLE FOR TOOLKIT USE

CSL assessment should capture not only what students know but what they can do and become through community engagement. A balanced evaluation system combines quantitative data (surveys, rubrics) and qualitative insights (reflections, interviews) to demonstrate both academic achievement and civic growth.

6

CHAPTER 6

Implementation plan for teacher training programme (workshops)

15′ Introduction to the CSL model

25′ Practical work: planning CSL activities

\+ Workshop evaluation

10′ Adapting CSL to existing courses

5′ Conclusion and key insights

Co-funded by the European Union

Workshop for higher education teachers: using the Career Service Learning (CSL) model in existing courses

WORKSHOP OBJECTIVE

To introduce the CSL model to participants and train them on how to integrate CSL into existing courses. The workshop focuses on practical approaches, collaboration with the economy and evaluating the impact of CSL on students.

FINAL OUTCOME OF THE WORKSHOP

- Each participant will have developed a model for integrating CSL into their course.
- A network of participating teachers and partners will be created.

1. Introduction to the CSL model 15 min

Content

- **What is CSL, and how does it differ from traditional teaching?** Career Service Learning is a pedagogical approach that combines academic learning with practical experiences in real-world environments. CSL encourages the development of soft skills, increases employability and allows for contributions to social responsibility.
- Key benefits of CSL for students, teachers, universities and communities.
- Examples of successful CSL programmes in higher education.

Use of good examples

Presenting examples from various universities.

Discussion

What challenges could CSL address in your course?

Curriculum analysis

Reflecting on potential CSL integration.

2. Adapting CSL to existing courses 10 min

2.1 Key steps in integrating CSL

1 Defining learning objectives

How does CSL contribute to existing course outcomes?

- Connecting CSL with existing course outcomes.
- Including social responsibility and practical experiences.
- Strengthening soft skills (communication, problem-solving, project management).
- Are there any other skills?

OPTIONS / SOLUTIONS

- Redefining learning objectives to include social responsibility and practical experiences.
- Adapting existing tasks so students work on real challenges from businesses or organisations.

2 Choosing the CSL model

CSL can be implemented in various ways:

- **Project work:** interdisciplinary groups solving specific challenges in businesses or communities.
- **Community service:** students engage in socially beneficial projects.
- **Collaboration with businesses:** students advise companies, developing sustainable business models.

OPTIONS / SOLUTIONS

- Allowing a combination of models depending on the course and learning objectives.
- Offering both individual and group projects for flexibility in implementation.

3 Collaboration with stakeholders

- Identifying appropriate organisations and businesses.
- Establishing partnerships and defining stakeholders' roles.
- Setting common goals and commitments.
- Planning group work and structured mentorship.

OPTIONS / SOLUTIONS

- Using existing university connections with businesses and communities.
- Developing a database of partners willing to collaborate with students.
- Inviting guest lecturers from the business and non-governmental sectors.

4 Evaluating and assessing CSL

- Reflective tasks (learning journal with self-assessment and analysis of acquired competences, reports, group discussions).
- Digital tools for tracking progress (logging reflections via e-portfolios).
- Feedback from students and partners.

Feedback and improvements

- Gathering feedback from students, mentors and partners.
- Adapting CSL activities based on feedback.

OPTIONS / SOLUTIONS

- Conducting regular surveys and evaluations of CSL programmes.
- Organising focus groups with stakeholders.

3. Practical work: planning CSL activities 25 min

Teachers are divided into groups and:

- transform existing content and activities/tasks in the course into CSL activities;
- identify potential partners who could collaborate in the implementation;
- develop a student assessment plan.

OPTIONS / SOLUTIONS

- Develop CSL templates that can be used across different courses.
- Group work and idea exchange among teachers from different fields.

Workshop participants prepare a personal action plan for integrating CSL into their course.

4. Conclusion: summary of key insights 5 min

- Summarise the main points discussed during the workshop.
- Highlight key findings and practical tips shared throughout the session.
- Connect the workshop content with the objectives set at the beginning.

POSSIBLE QUESTION

What was the most important takeaway from today's workshop?

POSSIBLE QUESTION

How can participants apply this in practice?

Workshop evaluation

1. Evaluation goals

The evaluation should answer the following questions:

?

Were the objectives of the workshop achieved?

?

How did the participants perceive the workshop (content, delivery, dynamics)?

?

What could be improved for future sessions?

?

What was the impact of the workshop on participants' knowledge, skills or behaviour?

2. Evaluation methods

1 Survey questionnaire (most commonly used)

Participants complete a short questionnaire on paper or through online tools such as Google Forms, Mentimeter or Slido.

Example questions. On a scale of 1 to 5, rate the following aspects of the workshop:

- **Content:** was it relevant and useful?
- **Presenter:** was the presenter clear, engaging and interactive?
- **Organisation:** was the timing appropriate?
- **Opportunity for participation:** did you have enough chances to interact?

Open questions: What was most useful to you? What would you improve? What will you apply in practice?

EXAMPLE RATING SCALE

Statement	Very dissatisfied (1)	Dissatisfied (2)	Neutral (3)	Satisfied (4)	Very satisfied (5)
The content was interesting and useful.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The presenter was clear and encouraging.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The organisation was effective.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

2 Oral evaluation (group reflection)

Ask participants to share their impressions: What was most useful to them? What would they improve? What will they apply in practice?

You can use the **3-2-1 method:**

3 things they learned	**2** questions they still have	**1** idea they will apply

3 Evaluation with symbols or visual methods

For quick feedback, use:

- **Post-it notes:** each person writes one positive comment and one improvement suggestion.
- **"Thermometer" method:** participants rate the workshop by positioning themselves on a scale (e.g. from "excellent" to "could be better").
- **Emoji voting:** participants choose an emoji that best reflects their experience.

3. Analysing and using feedback

- Review responses and look for recurring patterns (what was good, what needs improvement).

- If possible, use the feedback to improve future workshops.
- If multiple workshops were conducted, compare results and assess progress.
- You can send participants a short summary of findings and possible changes for future sessions.

7

CHAPTER 7

Conclusion and future directions

- Key takeaways and best practices
- Opportunities for collaborative research and innovation
- Next steps for institutions, educators and policymakers

Co-funded by the European Union

Key takeaways and best practices for sustainable CSL integration

Career Service Learning (CSL) has emerged as a crucial component of modern higher education, bridging the gap between academic knowledge and real-world applications.

This toolkit has provided a comprehensive roadmap for implementing CSL in higher education institutions (HEIs), ensuring that students are equipped with the skills necessary for lifelong career success. As HEIs move forward, a structured and sustainable approach to CSL integration will be key to maximising its impact.

A unified framework for CSL implementation must prioritise a holistic and systemic approach that connects institutional leadership, faculty engagement and student participation. Best practices identified through the partner countries' methodologies include:

01

Embedding CSL within curricula

Through modular and credit-bearing structures that align with learning outcomes and employability goals.

02

Promoting reflective practice

As a central component of CSL, enabling students to link theory, action and personal growth.

03

Developing strategic partnerships

With businesses, NGOs and public institutions to ensure the authenticity and relevance of CSL experiences.

04

Supporting faculty development

Through targeted training in experiential and reflective pedagogies.

05

Integrating technology and micro-credentials

To document and validate students' CSL competences across institutions and borders.

06

Ensuring continuous assessment and feedback

Allowing institutions to refine CSL approaches in response to evolving labour market needs.

These best practices confirm that CSL, when embedded into institutional culture, fosters employability, civic responsibility and lifelong learning competences: the cornerstone of sustainable higher education reform.

Next steps for institutions, educators and policymakers

The successful integration of CSL requires phased and coordinated institutional action, supported by policy frameworks and stakeholder collaboration. The following roadmap outlines the next strategic steps:

Phase 1

Strategic planning and stakeholder engagement

- Conduct institutional needs assessments and align CSL objectives with strategic goals.
- Secure leadership and policy-level commitment to embed CSL into quality assurance and accreditation systems.
- Build awareness among faculty, employers and students about the benefits and principles of CSL.

Phase 2

Pilot implementation and faculty capacity building

- Introduce CSL pilot projects in selected courses and disciplines.
- Provide professional development and peer-learning opportunities for educators.
- Document lessons learned and disseminate good practices internally.

Phase 3

Institutional integration and scaling

- Embed CSL within study programmes across faculties and departments.
- Formalise collaboration with external partners through memoranda of understanding.
- Ensure sustainable funding streams and incentives for CSL initiatives.

Phase 4

Evaluation and system-wide adaptation

- Establish mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating CSL outcomes using student, faculty and partner feedback.
- Adjust curricula and institutional policies based on data-driven insights.
- Share evaluation results with national and European networks to contribute to policy learning.

At the policy level, ministries and higher education authorities should incorporate CSL within national strategies for career guidance, employability and lifelong learning, ensuring alignment with the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and the EU Skills Agenda. Policymakers can also promote incentives for CSL implementation through funding schemes, teacher training programmes and recognition frameworks.

Opportunities for collaborative research and innovation in CSL

Future directions for CSL integration lie in the expansion of collaborative research, innovation and policy dialogue. HEIs should jointly explore evidence-based approaches that strengthen the educational, social and economic dimensions of CSL. Key opportunities include:

- **Cross-university research networks** focusing on the impact of CSL on employability, social inclusion and civic engagement.
- **Comparative studies and pilot projects** assessing CSL effectiveness across disciplines and cultural contexts.
- **Integration of digital innovation,** including e-portfolios, AI-assisted reflection tools and virtual CSL environments, to broaden accessibility and engagement.

- **Co-creation with industry and civil society,** ensuring that CSL projects address real community needs and enhance students' professional readiness.
- **Micro-credentialing and digital badging systems** to facilitate the recognition and transferability of CSL experiences within the European Qualifications Framework.

By embracing these opportunities, HEIs can position CSL as a core pillar of career development and social responsibility, fostering a new generation of graduates who are not only academically proficient but also equipped with practical skills, ethical awareness and the resilience to thrive in a rapidly changing global environment.

IN SUMMARY

The sustainability of CSL integration depends on collaboration: between **institutions and communities, educators and policymakers, students and employers.** Through shared commitment and continuous innovation, higher education can fully harness the transformative potential of Career Service Learning to prepare learners for meaningful, adaptable and socially responsible careers.

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