According to them, most of the European Universities find themselves in the second stage of raising awareness and convincing, as most of them have already recognised the relevance of being socially responsible. In this stage, the social responsibility has reached the internal management of the University and it usually coincides with the creation of a specific organizational structure for the coordination and implementation of the SR policies, strategies and actions. Nevertheless, many participants declared being implementing USR activities without having a USR policy.

The third stage, compromising and involving, is reached when USR becomes a transversal issue, and the above specific organizational structures works collaboratively with the rest of Vice-rectorate and collegiate centres and units to carry out USR actions. In this phase, University managers are convinced that the internal management of their respective collegiate organs must be socially responsible and the global University community (professors, students, administrative staff, etc) are also involved in these actions.

On the other hand, stakeholders discussed the priorities in relation to the policies and strategies of USR. They mentioned that the priority of universities should be the social change and that the students should be placed in the centre. Thus, respondents mentioned several values that should be also central to the university: Inclusion of persons with special needs; Support for the developing countries; Gender equality; Sustainable development; Volunteering and Employability of students and graduates.

Main drivers and barriers of University Social Responsibility. Stakeholders were also asked about their opinions in relation to the main drivers and barriers for the implementation of a University Social Responsibility Strategy in their institutions. In relation to the main drivers, they emphasized the importance of the Stakeholder engagement. Respect to the main barriers, most stakeholders emphasized the limitations caused by the lack of economic resources to implement the planned activities. Other main drivers and barriers are:
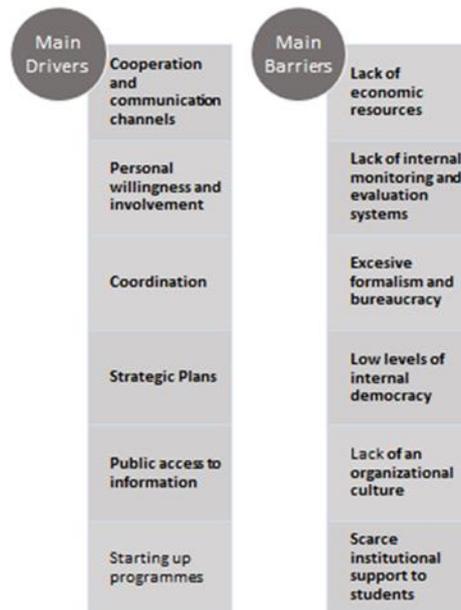
-figure 2. Main drivers and barriers-

❖ Benchmark Standards areas.

The interviewers were asked about the inclusiveness of the seven subjects extracted from the ISO 26000 and others sources. These areas were: Trust, Transparency, Accountability and Disclosure; Governance; Ethics, Rights, Respect and Justice; Labour & Fair Operating Practices; Environmental Responsibility; Democratic Citizenship, Development and Community Involvement; and Social Responsibility in Teaching, Support for Learning and Research. The interviewers mostly considered that all relevant aspects are covered by this set of standards. Nevertheless, new areas emerged: Academic Freedom; Accountability; Civilising contribution; Geographical area; Economic Support.

Also, the interviewers were asked on which ones were considered, from their points of view, as the most crucial areas. Four of them were selected as the most important.

-Figure 3. Core USR Standards-
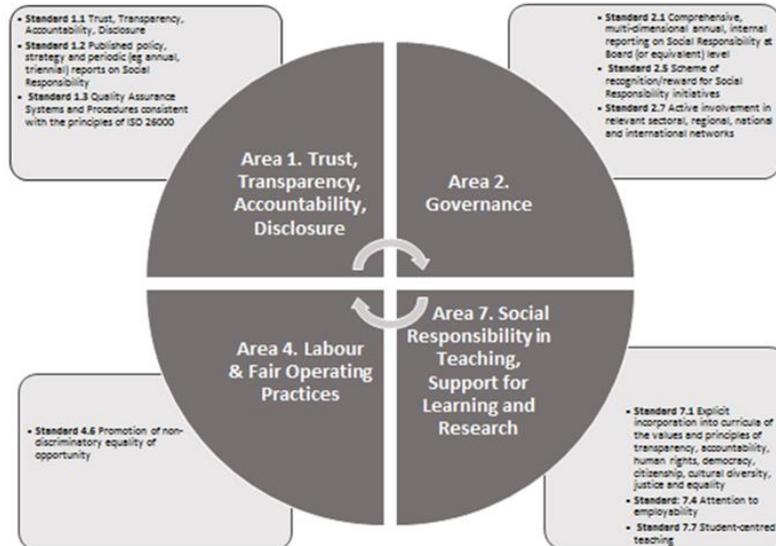
Core of the USR Standards (based on Stakeholders interviewed):

❖ <u>Benchmark Standards Usability</u>.

In general, the usability of this preliminary model received a very positive assessment, because it provides a useful framework for taking the next steps in social responsibility and because the Benchmark Standards could help Universities to organize, recognize, evaluate and inform about their SR efforts systematically.

Nevertheless, there are some aspects that could be improved, such as the need for more specific indicators and to take into account the national differences and national organizational cultures.

Also, some barriers for the application of the Benchmark Standards were identified:

➢ The actual salary and incentive systems,
➢ The reluctance to additional regulatory or public reporting requirements, and
➢ The dependence on its endorsement by the relevant HE authoritative bodies at European/national/regional levels.

Through this study we retrieved more information on how and to what extent the Standards of the project EU-USR can be implemented. It is very valuable information to achieve the objectives proposed in this project.

7. BENCHMARK STANDARDS FOR UNIVERSITY SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY ACROSS THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA (EHEA)

Following the decision to create a set of sector-specific Benchmark Standards, these were developed incrementally through a series of five benchmarking visits that took place across an eight-month period. The visits started on a relatively modest basis and their scope and rigor was expanded as the series unfolded and the Draft Standards were further developed. At the same time, the range of practice evidence examined was incrementally extended and a wider range of key informants invited to participate in the visits.

As it turned out, the programme of visits started with one to an institution whose approach to University Social Responsibility could be positioned at the "less developed" end of a continuum and ended with one to an institution that could be positioned at the "well developed" end, presenting an excellent opportunity for both the progression of the project team's thinking and the gradual development of our approach and of the reference criteria themselves. By the end of the series of Benchmarking Visits, these had become version 9 of a full set of Benchmark Standards for University Social Responsibility in the EHEA. Further development work and the contributions made in consultations after the conclusion of the Benchmarking Visits resulted in version 15, the final version produced as a result of this Project, as published in this Chapter.

The single most significant development in the process of developing the Benchmark Standards was the decision to create *ab initio* a completely new Standard, covering *Research, Teaching, Support for Learning and Public Engagement,* that addresses social responsibility in the core activities of the typical European university.

The broad aim set in the Project Proposal for the Benchmarking Visits was that they would "allow for comparative analysis *in situ* of plans, methodologies and activities in the sphere of USR" in specific institutions. As the Project developed and given the decision to develop a set of sector-specific Benchmark Standards, the nature of the Benchmarking Visits shifted *from (a)* being primarily an extension of the work reported on in 3 above, furthering and deepening the collection of examples of current practice in order to derive from these a set of Benchmarks on a norm-referenced basis *to (b)* testing the Project's own criterion-referenced Draft Benchmark Standards against policy and practice in the case institutions that were the focus of the Benchmarking Visits.

Inevitably, the approach adopted meant that the focus of the Benchmarking Visits was primarily on the exploratory and formative application of the (Draft) Benchmark Standards themselves to the case institution rather than on evaluation of the institutional policy and practice itself.

In any case, the assumption underlying the original conceptualisation of the project that Benchmarks could be derived from the Benchmarking Visits by means of identifying "good" practice in the institutions visited proved impossible to realise. This was due to the wide variability across the institutions visited in terms of definitions of USR and in the general "state of the art" regarding University Social Responsibility, which is at a very early stage of development across the EHEA as a whole, notwithstanding the progress that has been made by some 'early-adopters' and a degree of maturity in policy and practice that has been attained by a few.

Thus, the orientation shifted from a norm-referencing (or "best practice") approach to benchmarking to a criterion-referencing approach, informed by the notion of *Core Competencies* ie unique characteristics or abilities that cannot be easily imitated, a notion consistent with the long history of formal, university-based higher education in Europe and the distinctive characteristics of this.

At the same time, all the evidence we accessed suggests that a particular type of benchmarking is required, going forward, ie an adaptive form of *Internal Benchmarking*, that is one that would operate at a sectoral level and be of an essentially collaborative nature. This notion is further developed in Chapter 8 below which sets out ideas for the collaborative sharing of experience and information consistent with the notion of some form of network, as envisaged in the Manifesto (see Chapter 9 below).

The **Benchmark Standards** that follow are therefore presented as providing a **Common Reference Framework for University Social Responsibility across the European Higher Education Area,** consistent with USR being a *Core Competence* of European universities collectively.

There are four Standards, each of which is specified in its own set of criteria.

1. Research, Teaching, Support for Learning and Public Engagement

The institution's core academic activities are underpinned by the values and principles of social responsibility. In order to ensure this, the institution

1.1 Guarantees academic freedom for its staff and students.

1.2 Widens and diversifies access to education within a commitment to lifelong learning.

1.3 Manages student admissions in a transparent and equitable way, using explicit criteria to inform selection decisions, providing formative feedback to unsuccessful candidates.

1.4 Ensures that public funds provided to support teaching and student fees are used for the

purpose for which they are provided.

1.5 Requires that its curricula are informed by socially responsible, ethical research and that its graduate attributes incorporate evidence-based thinking and decision-making, active citizenship and employability.

1.6 Adopts a learner-centred approach to teaching and student support, ensuring assessment and feedback is used to promote learning.

1.7 Facilitates collaborative and independent learning that goes beyond the classroom and into the community.

1.8 Enables international collaboration and supports student and staff cross-national mobility.

1.9 Enforces ethical protocols for research, teaching and related activities.

1.10 Facilitates dialogue between the research community, the public and policymakers to link research to 'real world' issues.

1.11 Improves its contribution to society through open access to research outcomes and its public engagement activities.

2. Governance

The principles of social responsibility are respected throughout institutional policy, strategy, procedures and processes. They permeate all levels, as an integral element of management accountability and stakeholder engagement. The institution:

2.1 Encourages a culture of social responsibility with high ethical and professional standards and clear protocols to avoid conflict of interest.

2.2 Formally recognises staff and student unions and involves them as partners in governance and decision-making, providing for their representation on the Board (or equivalent) and on its advisory committees.

2.3 Ensures that social responsibility is treated as a core commitment by the Board and senior management and that the institution's social responsibility performance is the focus for annual evaluative reporting.

2.4 Exercises due diligence by assessing the risk and impact of all activities, ensuring compliance with the law, relevant standards and norms.

2.5 Conducts ethical and socially responsible investment and procurement, with comprehensive public reporting of criteria and decisions.

2.6 Is a responsible neighbour, facilitating dialogue and working in partnership with and investing in the local community.

2.7 Recognises its staff and student social responsibility initiatives through an internal reward

scheme.

2.8 Actively participates in relevant social responsibility networks.

2.9 Reports on its progress towards clear and independently verified social responsibility and sustainability goals.

2.10 Publishes the outcomes of internal and external reviews, complaints, academic appeals and the source and use of all funding.

3. Environmental and Societal Sustainability

The institution is committed to environmental sustainability and biodiversity in all aspects of its operations, including in its use of goods, services and works and in its evaluation of decisions. It takes appropriate action to ensure that its commitments are realised and

3.1 Ensures its policies and practices minimise any negative impact on the environment caused by its activities or supply chain.

3.2 Promotes sustainable development.

3.3 Delivers a continuous improvement programme that works towards cleaner, sustainable, eco-efficient, resource efficient, zero waste and ethical operations including procurement.

3.4 Publishes regular environmental sustainability reports, incorporating risk and action assessments covering environmental, societal and supply chain risks.

3.5 Encourages the use of environmentally friendly technologies, and of energy efficient, reusable and biodegradable materials.

3.6 Practices socially responsible and sustainable procurement, publishes a code of ethical behaviour for procurement decision-making that includes workers' rights and fair trade principles and promotes social responsibility and sustainability wherever it has influence over the supply chain.

3.7 Ensures respect for and compliance with internationally proclaimed human rights, the rule of law and national and International anti-corruption requirements.

3.8 Ensures that all its International activities promote human and societal development and, where possible, help address the issues of poverty, quality of life, advance peace and promote conflict resolution.

4. Fair Practices

The institution ensures equality and fairness for its staff, students, and others as appropriate and its policies and procedures are intended to avoid discrimination or inequity. The institution

4.1 Promotes and celebrates pluralism and diversity, and ensures equality regardless of age, culture, ethnicity, gender or sexuality.

4.2 Practices open, transparent, fair and equitable recruitment and promotion of staff, using affirmative action where appropriate, providing comprehensive staff development that incorporates social responsibility.

4.3 Establishes through negotiation with staff unions comprehensive employee communication, consultation and negotiation protocols and implements these.

4.4 Promotes the health, safety, physical social and mental wellbeing of staff and students beyond minimum legal requirements.

4.5 Promotes equality of opportunity, guarantees equal, fair and just pay and equitable conditions, and proactively works to avoid inequality through flexible working and career development and progression opportunities.

4.6 Ensures that working conditions at least comply with relevant national laws, collective agreements and applicable International Labour Organisation standards and makes every effort to avoid casualisation of the workforce.

4.7 Guarantees freedom of association and respects collective bargaining.

4.8 Has transparent, fair and equitable complaints and disciplinary procedures and ensures that complaints and disciplinary matters are addressed swiftly and fairly.

4.9 Publishes the possible sanctions for a proven breach of ethical or related requirements and protects whistleblowers.

4.10 Provides professional support services to meet specific additional needs of students and staff as arising from a disability, for example.

4**.11** Communicates with suppliers about its procurement policy and uses research to inform its procurement decisions.

8. THE EU-USR COMMON REFERENCE FRAMEWORK AS A COLLABORATIVE AND KNOWLEDGE-ORIENTED SYSTEM

The EU-USR project had the main goal of establishing a preliminary model and standards to identify and support recognition and improvement of the Social Responsibility in HE institutions and has, therefore, developed a set of instruments that we consider with high potential to build a collaborative and knowledge oriented system that allows permanent and self-sustained screening of USR interesting practices, which raises awareness and capacity for increased USR in HEIs.

The approach for the development and sustainability of the EU-USR results is based in the articulation of three domains – Collaboration, Knowledge Management and Technologies.

-Figure 4. Collaborative and knowledge-driven model-
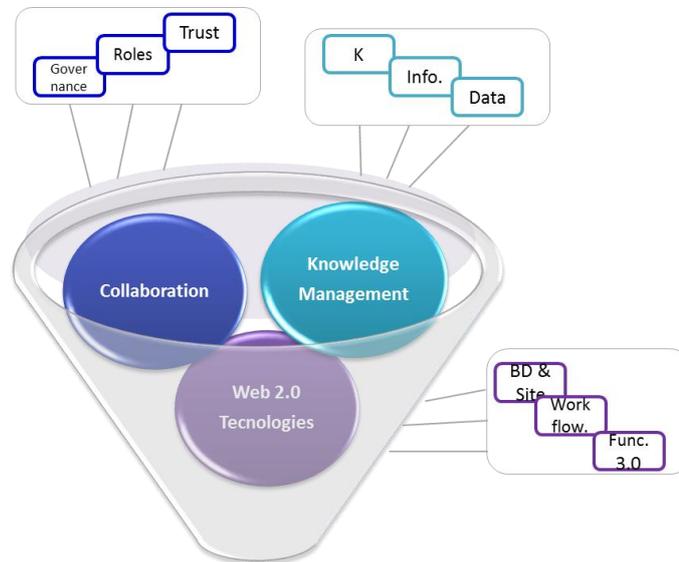
As one of the major post-project objectives, we define reinforcement of the sense of community among HEI, having USR interests as the common ground. Considering the purpose of achieving an integrated transnational view at the European level, collaborative systems are suitable to this context. Therefore, the EU-USR model and tools should be seen in the post-project phase as an integrated set of collaboration activities.

In a widely connected world, cooperation among external entities emerge as a key for success, meaning that acting together, gathering specialized competences, in a synergic way, to achieve mutual gains. By collaborating, knowledge acquisition from external sources is nurtured and could lead to higher levels of proficiency. However, the orchestration of external parties requires coordination methods that should combine formal and informal governance. Thus, an open governance model should be implemented to ensure peers participation and involvement. Complementing the collaborative setting of EU-USR a culture of trust among peers should be underlined. In the light of collaboration management, human dimension is an essential factor to aggregate cooperative efforts between external partners. We consider important to emphasize the role of *social capital* as a major factor to promoter an enabling environment for sharing and learning. Trust is an indispensable condition to nurture a collaborative context.

Another key driver to EU-USR development and sustainability in the future lies in the capacity of transforming EU-USR outcomes in a management system for USR screening and assessment, which may be seen as a system that processes data, applies an agreed informational model and produces knowledge (impacting HE policies). The strategic value of a collaborative system is directly connected with a strategy of knowledge management, related to the construction of processes of acquisition of knowledge from external sources, combination and diffusion of knowledge. In this perspective of EU-USR sustainability model, knowledge management must meet the nature of collective learning, which implies a challenge of access to external sources,

the ability to understand these sources (knowledge absorption) and the transfer of knowledge generated for the USR community. The proposed dimension of knowledge management model follows the logic of knowledge spiral (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995), despite conferring a greater emphasis on combination and externalization of knowledge.

-    Figure 5 -
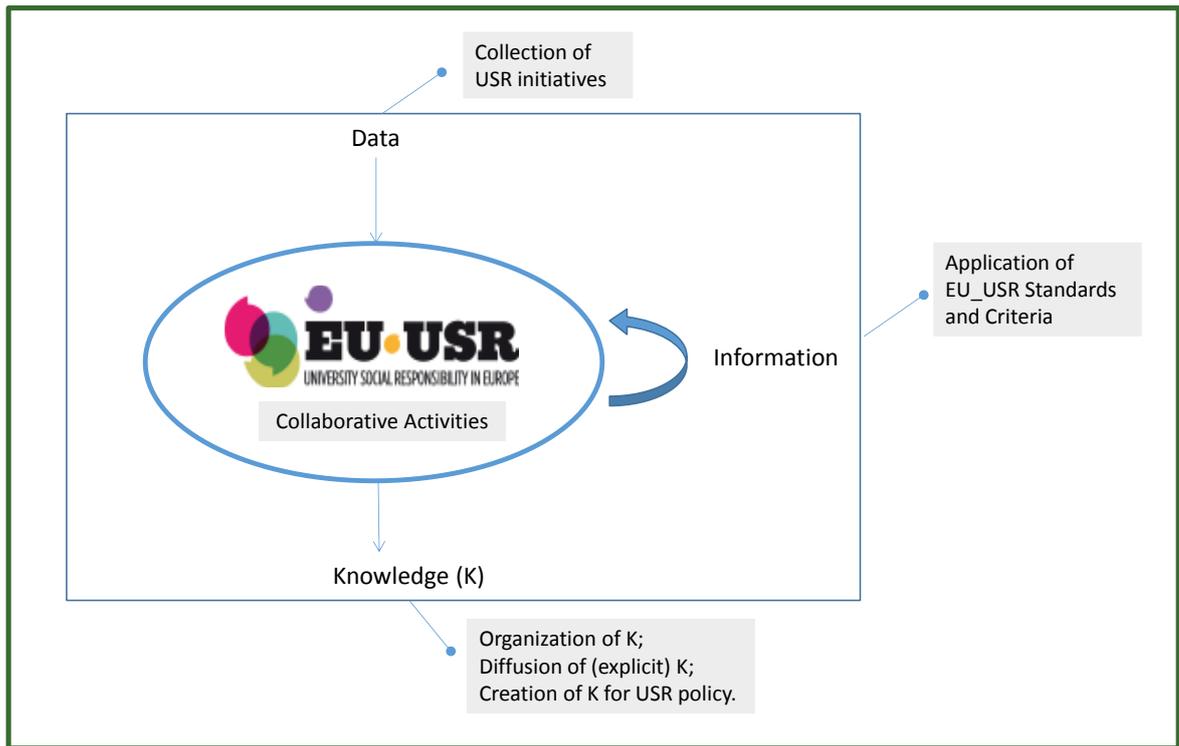
The third dimension consists in an envisaged infrastructure that supports the functional model explained – web technology. The Internet is the most rapid technological adoption of our history and social technologies, in particular, widespread at an unparalleled pace. The impact of these technologies on communication (ease of exchange of semi-structured data and even knowledge), community (foster interactions in groups) and cooperation (accomplish tasks jointly and synchronously) are crucial.

When USR initiatives may be gathered and registered in a USR Database and a collaborative workflow system has been put in place to support the screening and assessment process, a web based workflow will be crucial to the orchestration of competences between different stakeholders. The technology strategy here implicit includes the development of automatic suggestions of initiatives related to an explicit search result. Thus, after an initiative search result, the web system should suggest others from the USR Database that could be somewhat related, following a Web 3.0 logic (Internet of things). This functionality of semantic engine would give more visibility to related initiatives.

Overall, EU-USR innovative approach for the sustainability of its results is anchored, first of all, in an integrated view of collaboration, knowledge management and technology. It is clear that the success of EU-USR sustainability should be founded by an articulated strategy involving transfer of created knowledge and gathering of collaborative tasks in an effective way.

The environment of knowledge sharing initiated during the project life with relevant European institutions, supported by an envisaged EU-USR information system, would facilitate the mobilization of peers and reinforced the sense of community – that is key to a sustainable view of USR management.

Integrated in the above described collaborative and knowledge oriented system for sustainability, the EU-USR Manifesto (Section 9) is a public declaration of principles and intentions. It is an attempt to develop a shared understanding, some shared reasons and, mainly, shared knowledge of practice on USR.

It is intended to be a tool to help shape the debate around USR and facilitating awareness, drawing on our in-depth and practical knowledge of the challenges that are faced by the key actors of HE sector. As a bold and outstanding declaration that a group of people, united by a common vision and a common goal, launch to the public in order to explain what they stand for and are willing to work, sharing values and objectives, identifying a way forward and containing a proposal for a strong and alternative model to the dominant one as well as pledging to play by certain rules. It is thought as the result of our collective experience and efforts to "unthink" and co-construct an innovative vision and methodology to enhance and promote social impact in HE institutions.

9. THE EU-USR MANIFESTO

We, the signatories of this Manifesto that has been developed by the EU-USR Project co-funded by the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Union:

- *Believe that the missions of all Universities are of public interest and what they do – in terms of teaching, research and public engagement – must reflect awareness of societal needs at local and global level and promote the values of equity, social cohesion, non-discrimination, inclusion, access and sustainability, allowing them to become examples of responsible management, civic participation, democracy and positive social impact, acting as an inspiration for others and for students in particular;*

- *Note that the social role of Universities is a concern of the United Nations, UNESCO, the Council of Europe, the European Union and others, and is an object of interest of several*

existing networks at international level, but also observe that awareness and implementation strategies are not equally developed in all countries and institutions, leaving many well intentioned actors in conditions of uncertainty and lack of practical support when they want to drive change in the direction of University Social Responsibility;

- *Recognise the value that ISO 26000 may have in the development of University Social Responsibility, but also the need to adapt them when applied to institutions that already have social mission, through their teaching, research and public engagement, and where students and staff have their right to be involved in governance, the development of policy and strategy, management and decision-making which promotes the common good;*

- *Understand that each University will have a different profile, objectives and expected achievements in the field of Social Responsibility, but also that reference standards may help to identify relevant areas and objectives to be achieved, as well as to structure collaboration;*

- *Propose new Benchmark Standards for University Social Responsibility, the product of analysis of a wide range of evidence, a series of benchmarking visits and consultations; advocate the use of these Standards to benchmark, self-assess, peer review and exchange information and knowledge about USR policies, strategies and practices across the EHEA, to help move beyond declarations of principle and isolated good practice;*

- *Call for a new commitment from all relevant parties (policy makers, higher education stakeholders, existing university networks and individual Higher Education Institutions) to systematically work together in support of University Social Responsibility;*

- *Propose the creation of a European networking and community environment to provide focused advocacy, promote awareness and support the development of policy, strategy and practice through the sharing of information, exchange of knowledge and the development of a system of peer review.*

I Endorse This Manifesto (http://www.eu-usr.eu/?page_id=533)

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ANNEX. TOOLKIT: GAP ANALYSIS AND ACTION PLANNING FOR USR

The following questionnaire provides a basis for the introduction of the Benchmark Standards in a University.

The process is defined in 3 stages:

Stage 1: Your current view

Firstly, the responsible department should provide essential preliminary information such as:

- A description of the University itself: general characteristics and key partners.
- The meaning of SR for the University.
- The University's specific USR goals, the main principles used to inform actions and how the University is trying to meet the goals through its actions

Stage 2: Self-Assessment against the Benchmark Standards

In this stage, the University will assess the situation for each of the Benchmark Standards of the four areas. For some Benchmark Standards, what it is already being done will be identified. For the other Benchmark Standards, suggestions for future actions will be articulated.

A template is provided below to enable Universities wishing to adopt this tool to complete analysis against the Benchmark Standards.

Stage 3: Action Plan for Improvement.

Based on the previous analysis, the University will develop an Action Plan in 3 steps:

Step 1: Identify key issues and core areas for the USR improvements. When doing this, the following three factors might be considered:

- The impacts of the changes you are considering.
- The capability and resources to carry out the changes.
- The visibility of the changes you are considering.

Step 2: How to choose the first USR changes. When choosing the first USR changes, keep in mind that some changes may have substantial impacts but are beyond the current University resources. Other changes may be highly visible to the public yet bring little impact. For the USR efforts to be sustainable in their impact, funding and support, it is important to consider all three factors of impacts, capability and visibility.

Step 3: Draw up the action plan. When the University draws up the plan of improvement, must be sure to:

- Identify the core areas/Benchmark Standards addressed.
- Explain the goals (impacts) wanted to achieve with the plan.
- Keep the plan realistic.
- Allocate enough resources (money, time, people with authority within the University) to make it works.
- Set a deadline for plan completion and evaluation, including reporting back to the stakeholders.

This plan would become part of future public reports. The management team and stakeholders could use this to evaluate the University's commitment to continual progress in implementing principles of University Social Responsibility.

Toolkit: Gap Analysis and action planning for USR

University General Information	
University Name:	
Person or department filling the template:	
Date:	
Mail:	
Telephone number:	

Benchmark Standards	Relevance for your Institution		Action Plan		
	Important	**Not very important**	**Already in action**	**In action soon**	**In action in the future**
1. Research, Teaching, Support for Learning and Public Engagement *The institution's core academic activities are underpinned by the values and principles of social responsibility. In order to ensure this, the institution:*					
1.1. Guarantees academic freedom for its staff and students.					
1.2. Widens and diversifies access to education within a commitment to lifelong learning.					
1.3. Manages student admissions in a transparent and equitable way, using explicit criteria to inform selection decisions, providing formative feedback to unsuccessful candidates.					
1.4. Ensures that public funds provided to support teaching and student fees are used for the purpose for which they are provided.					

Benchmark Standards	Relevance for your Institution		Action Plan		
	Important	Not very important	Already in action	In action soon	In action in the future
1.5. Requires that its curricula are informed by socially responsible, ethical research and that its graduate attributes incorporate evidence--based thinking and decision-making, active citizenship and employability.					
1.6. Adopts a learner--centred approach to teaching and student support, ensuring assessment and feedback is used to promote learning.					
1.7. Facilitates collaborative and independent learning that goes beyond the classroom and into the community.					
1.8. Enables international collaboration and supports student and staff cross--national mobility.					
1.9. Enforces ethical protocols for research, teaching and related activities.					
1.10. Facilitates dialogue between the research community, the public and policy makers to link research to 'real world' issues.					
1.11. Improves its contribution to society through open access to research outcomes and its public engagement activities.					
2. Governance **The principles of social responsibility are respected throughout institutional policy, strategy, procedures and processes. They permeate all levels, as an integral element of management accountability and stakeholder engagement. The institution:**					
2.1. Encourages a culture of social responsibility with high ethical and professional standards and clear protocols to avoid conflict of interest.					

Benchmark Standards	Relevance for your Institution		Action Plan		
	Important	Not very important	Already in action	In action soon	In action in the future
2.2. Formally recognises staff and student unions and involves them as partners in governance and decision-making, providing for their representation on the Board (or equivalent) and on its advisory committees.					
2.3. Ensures that social responsibility is treated as a core commitment by the Board and senior management and that the institution's social responsibility performance is the focus for annual evaluative reporting.					
2.4. Exercises due diligence by assessing the risk and impact of all activities. Action is prioritised to ensure compliance with the law and norms.					
2.5. Conducts ethical and socially responsible investment and procurement, with comprehensive public reporting of criteria and decisions.					
2.6. Is a responsible neighbour, working in partnership with and investing in the local community?					
2.7. Recognises its staff and student social responsibility initiatives through an internal reward scheme.					
2.8. Actively participates in relevant social responsibility networks.					
2.9. Reports on its progress towards clear and independently verified social responsibility and sustainability goals.					
2.10. Publishes the outcomes of internal and external reviews, complaints, academic appeals and the source and use of all funding.					

Benchmark Standards	Relevance for your Institution		Action Plan		
	Important	Not very important	Already in action	In action soon	In action in the future
3. Environmental and Societal Sustainability *The institution is committed to environmental sustainability and biodiversity in all aspects of its operations, including in its use of goods, services and works and in its evaluation of decisions. It takes appropriate action to ensure that its commitments are realised.*					
3.1. Ensures its policies and practices minimise any negative impact on the environment caused by its activities or supply chain.					
3.2. Promotes sustainable development.					
3.3. Delivers a continuous improvement programme that works towards cleaner, sustainable, eco--efficient, resource efficient, zero waste and ethical operations including procurement.					
3.4. Publishes regular environmental sustainability reports, incorporating risk and action assessments covering environmental, societal and supply chain risks.					
3.5. Encourages the use of environmentally friendly technologies, and of energy efficient, reusable and biodegradable materials.					
3.6. Practices socially responsible and sustainable procurement, publishes a code of ethical behavior for procurement decision making that includes workers' rights and fair trade principles and promotes social responsibility and sustainability wherever it has influence over the supply chain.					
3.7. Ensures respect for and compliance internationally proclaimed human rights, the rule of law and national and International anticorruption requirements					

Benchmark Standards	Relevance for your Institution		Action Plan		
	Important	Not very important	Already in action	In action soon	In action in the future
3.8. Ensures that all its International activities promote human and societal development and, where possible, help address the issues of poverty, quality of life, advance peace and promote conflict resolution.					
4. Fair Practices _The institution ensures equality and fairness for its staff, students, and others as appropriate and its policies and procedures are intended to avoid discrimination or inequity. The institution:_					
4.1. Promotes and celebrates pluralism and diversity, and ensures equality regardless of age, culture, ethnicity, gender or sexuality.					
4.2. Practices open, transparent, fair and equitable recruitment and promotion of staff, using affirmative action where appropriate, providing comprehensive staff development that incorporates social responsibility.					
4.3. Establishes through negotiation with staff Unions comprehensive employee communication, consultation and negotiation protocols and implements these.					
4.4. Promotes the health, safety, physical social and mental well--being of staff and students beyond minimum legal requirements.					
4.5. Promotes equality of opportunity. It guarantees equal, fair and just pay, equitable conditions, and pro--actively works to avoid inequality through flexible working and career development and progression opportunities.					
4.6. Ensures that working conditions at least comply with relevant national laws, collective agreements and applicable International Labour Organisation standards and makes every effort to avoid casualisation of the workforce.					

Benchmark Standards	Relevance for your Institution		Action Plan		
	Important	Not very important	Already in action	In action soon	In action in the future
4.7. Guarantees freedom of association, collective bargaining and union recognition					
4.8. Has transparent, fair and equitable complaints and disciplinary procedures and ensures that complaints and disciplinary matters are addressed swiftly and fairly.					
4.9. Publishes the possible sanctions for a proven breach of ethical or related requirements and protects whistleblowers.					
4.10. Provides professional support services to meet specific additional needs of students and staff as arising from a disability, for example.					
4.11. Communicates with suppliers about its procurement policy and uses research to inform its procurement decisions.					

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María del Carmen Osuna López. General University of Granada Company Foundation

José Manuel Robles. Universidad Internacional de La Rioja.

Fernanda Rodrigues. Porto University.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to thanks to the following for their support:

- Social Council of the University of Cadiz
- Vice-chancellor of Social Responsibility of the University of Cadiz.
- Equality Unit of the University of Cadiz
- Work Committee of the University of Cadiz
- Student Association of the University of Cadiz
- University of Évora
- University of Lisbon
- Lisbon Polytechnic Institute
- University Institute of Lisbon
- Polytechnic Institute of Setúbal.
- National Distance Education University
- University of Castilla La Mancha
- European University of Madrid
- Complutense University of Madrid
- David Somervell, Head of Social Responsibility and Sustainability Futures at the University of Edinburg