EU·USR
UNIVERSITY SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN EUROPE

**Comparative Research on the Social Responsibility of
Universities in Europe and Development of a Community
Reference Framework**

EU-USR

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USR MANIFESTO AND DEVELOPMENT PLAN

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1. INTRODUCTION

This document encompasses the presentation of a development plan for the presentation and validation of the EU-USR Manifesto in relation to the relevant stakeholders who may bring contributions to the further development of the Manifesto and its applicability.

The first chapter introduces the first version of the Manifesto, and the following chapters refer to the Development Plan in a framework of an EU level Focus Group for the envisaged stakeholders' auscultation.

2. EU-USR MANIFESTO

2.1. GUIDELINES AND NOTES

It 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 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.

Considering the sustainability orientation of the EU-USR project – not replicating structures of other existing networks on USR and bringing added value to existing networks – this manifesto proposes to approach the issue in a framework of a "Fellowship" or "Membership" instead of a "Network". This proposal aims to clarify the EU-USR networking purposes without colliding with existing networks on USR or other consolidated inter-Universities "agendas", whose engagement may be of great importance for the sustainability of the EU-USR outcomes.

"Membership" is an alternative, considering Fellowship might be more related to individuals than institutions. Network, Fellowship, Membership, Partnership or another term is a decision the project needs to take in view of the EU-USR strategy.

2.2.   EU-USR FELLOWSHIP MANIFESTO

Social dimension of higher education, which was absent in the genesis of the Bologna Declaration in 1999, became a central issue in the Ministerial declarations of London (2007) and Leuven (2009). Even if much of the current discussion surrounding university social responsibility presents it as a "new" topic, it emerged from the work around corporate social responsibility (CSR) and the recent renewed EU strategy 2011-1014 for CSR, where the European Commission presents an even wider definition of CSR as "the responsibility of enterprises for their impacts on society", including "maximizing the creation of shared value" and "identifying preventing and mitigating their possible adverse impacts".

On the other hand, the social role of higher education is not a new issue in itself, since in all countries, with different emphasis, the contribution of higher education institutions to social development is recognized and the UNESCO declaration of 1998 (World Declaration on Higher Education for the twenty-century: vision and action) puts the issue in great evidence.

We believe higher education institutions, as public services, have a social function and they should include social responsibility references in their mission, vision and strategy, in a way that it has a real impact on all their activities and actions: teaching, research, transfer, and management (Larrán et all, 2012). In the same direction, the core mission of higher education institutions in promoting competence development in its students cannot ignore the fact that competence implies a complex combination of knowledge, capacity, communication and social impact (OECD, 2009) where ethics should play a central role in all higher education activities, internally and externally.

Testifying the growing enrolment rates in higher education institutions in Europe in the past decades, at the same time as we observe negative correlations between the highest levels of education and significant awareness to fundamental values of democratic societies (Carvalho, 2013), the role of higher education institutions in promoting shared universal values that transcend culture, ideology and even curricula, becomes an even more relevant priority.

The EU-USR Fellowship recognizes the growing importance of promoting social and civic skills in higher education students as part of and transversally to any curriculum, as they are foundational to their comprehensive development as integral persons, committed to apply the acquired knowledge and technical capacities to the higher good of their communities' wellbeing.

In this context, the founding and member institutions of the EU-USR Fellowship commit to a European management approach that promotes social responsibility in higher education in a long term perspective. Moreover, these members recognize the key role of higher education institutions in contributing to their local communities' social development and sustainability, by setting the example of responsible management, civic participation and positive social impact, being an inspiration for others to do the same.

We do not believe that a single model of developing USR would fit any higher education institution, irrespective of its nature, size and context, therefore the EU-USR Fellowship commits to share access to a generic framework for reflection and continuing collaborative improvement, based on specific, tested and validated tools that increase the higher education sector performance in social responsibility.

Instead of aiming to create a new network on social responsibility, the EU-USR Fellowship shall concentrate its efforts in bridging existing networks and similar organizations in the USR field, benchmarking best practices at an international collaboration setting and bringing increased capacity by providing added-value ICT based operational tools to support them in their social responsibility endeavours and investments.

By systematizing and sharing best practices on USR amongst its members, the EU-USR Fellowship will continuously aim to promote the reflection on the higher education social responsibility, helping them to identify, analyse and structure the information in order to achieve and implement responsible and sustainable management processes.

We believe that EU Universities can contribute to international debate and concrete developments in the field of USR by sharing the experience they gained in balanced international collaboration in the frame of the so-called Bologna Process, based on ongoing self-evaluation, by benchmarking practice and collaborative, cross-institutional and cross-border learning.

The EU-USR Fellowship therefore commits to share information, understanding and motivations to promote the debate around social responsibility in higher education and facilitating awareness at their institutions, drawing on the Fellowship's in-depth and practical knowledge of the challenges faced by the key actors of the higher education sector.

3. BACKGROUND FOR THE FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

3.1.   PRESENTATION OF THE EU-USR PROJECT

The **USR-EU project** aims to design, through an approach *bottom up,* led by some of the higher education institutions, non profit and private organizations more advanced in the field of SR, a European model that promotes social responsibility of Universities from a long term perspective. The main objectives of the project are as follows:

- Identify and analyse **good practices** in the field of university social responsibility in Europe.

- Design a system for ***benchmarking*** aimed at identifying the skills related to social responsibility should have the authorities and university managers and improve the capacity of higher education institutions to meet the needs of their communities in a socially responsible manner.

- Develop a **European model** to promote social responsibility among university and community outreach professionals in the field of Higher Education.

- Create a **European network** of university social responsibility to share and discuss the main results of the project.

3.2. EU-USR MODEL

Social dimension of higher education, which was absent in the genesis of the Bologna Declaration in 1999, became a central issue in the Ministerial declarations of London (2007) and Leuven (2009). Even if much of the current discussion surrounding university social responsibility presents it as a "new" topic, it emerged from the work around Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) (Bowen, 1953; Votaw, 1972) and for that reason, the EU-USR project considers the recent renewed EU strategy 2011-2014 for CSR, where the European Commission presents an even wider definition of CSR as "the responsibility of enterprises for their impacts on society", including "maximizing the creation of shared value" and "identifying, preventing and mitigating their possible adverse impacts".

Universities, as public services, have a social function and they should include CSR references in their mission, vision and strategy, in a way that it has a real impact on all their activities: teaching, research, transfer, and management (Larrán et all, 2012). Many Universities´ managers have begun to consider CSR as a differentiating factor and a competitive advantage.

In order CSR can be included in the strategy of higher education institutions, the proposed EU-USR model aims to promote the reflection on the Universities Social Responsibility (USR), helping them to identify, analyse, structure the information in order to achieve and implement a responsible management. The objective is not to design a specific model valid for every University but a generic framework for reflection and improvement.

The model will not start from scratch, but from integrating and adapting to the HE initiatives that are already being implemented in other organizations (see sub-section 3.1) and it would be composed by the following elements:

- Model Coherence with University missions, values and activities.
- Model Areas based on the adapted seven core subjects of the ISO 26000.
- Model Usability consisting in:
    – Framework for self-assessment: to identify what Universities are doing in their current practices.
    – Stakeholders´ engagement: to establish recommendations for communicating with groups affected by the University actions in a socially responsible way.
    – Action plan for improvement: to define a set of actions/priorities for improvement.
    – Public reporting: to define a set of guidelines to help Universities to report their social responsibility's activities.

The definition and validation of the model and the relevant areas/standards of social responsibility will be achieved through field work (focus groups) carried out with key experts/stakeholders in partners´ Universities and in EU Higher Education Sector.

Brief explanation of the preliminary model areas based on the ISO 26000

ISO 26000 is a voluntary guidance standard on social responsibility designed for use by any organization. It can be used by organizations´ leaders to plan and implement actions to improve their sustainability – economically, socially, and environmentally.

ISO 26000 provides broad guidance, but does not offer specific instructions or require specific outcomes. Universities that implement ISO 26000 have opportunities to identify and act on their own priorities, and to build stronger organizational models in the spirit of "continuous improvement." Implementers of ISO 26000 will develop their unique corporate social responsibility programs and become models for others.

ISO 26000 was created by a diverse group of experts, representing many different countries, stakeholder groups[1], and points of view. Work began in 2005 and was completed in 2010. Creation of the standard was organized by the International Standardization Organization, ISO, based in Geneva Switzerland. Since 1947 ISO has developed over 17,000 standards to encourage world trade and quality production. Previous well-known ISO standards include ISO 9000 (quality control) and ISO 14000 (environmental management systems). Unlike ISO 9000 and 14000, however, ISO 26000 is a voluntary guidance standard and is not intended for certification.

ISO 26000 identifies seven core subjects that socially responsible businesses should address. Implementers of ISO 26000 should evaluate their actions in each of the core subjects, to identify what they are doing in their current practices, and to set priorities for improvements.
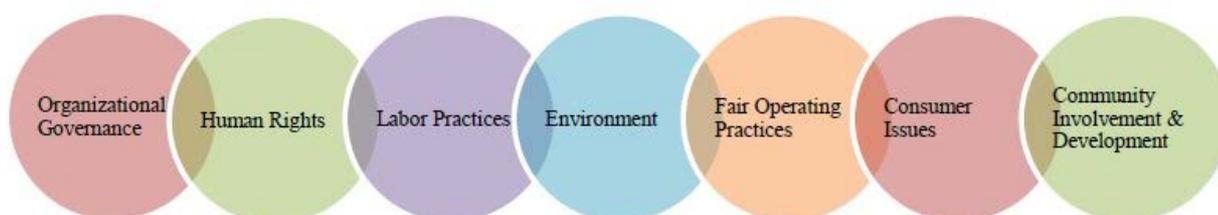
1. Organizational governance: practicing accountability and transparency at all levels of your organization; using leadership to create an organizational culture which uses core values of social responsibility when making business decisions.

2. Human rights: treating all individuals with respect; making special efforts to help people from vulnerable groups.

3. Labor practices: providing just, safe and healthy conditions for workers; engaging in two-way discussions to address workers' concerns.

4. Environment: identifying and improving environmental impacts of your operations, including resource use and waste disposal.

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[1] The Working Group on Social Responsibility (WGSR) that created ISO 26000 included six stakeholder groups: industry, government, labor, NGO, consumer, and SSRO (service, support, research and others).

5. Fair operating practices: respecting the law; practicing accountability and fairness in your dealings with other businesses, including your suppliers.

6. Consumer issues: providing healthy and safe products, giving accurate information, and promoting sustainable consumption.

7. Community involvement and development: getting involved in the betterment of the local communities that your organization operates in; being a good neighbour.

3.1. MATRIX OF USR STANDARDS

(by each ISO 26000 core subject)

EU-USR Matrix of University Social Responsibility Standards
1. Trust, Transparency, Accountability, Disclosure
1.1 Explicit commitment by 2014 to the principles and guidelines of ISO 26000
1.2 Published policy, strategy and periodic (eg annual, triennial) reports on Social Responsibility
1.3 Quality Assurance Systems and Procedures consistent with the principles of ISO 26000
1.4 Publication of Quality Profile
1.5 Mechanisms to support and extend social dialogue
1.6 Reporting of outcomes from robust internal and third-party reviews and evaluations
1.7 Comprehensive reporting regarding Complaints, Legal Actions, Appeals etc
1.8 Comprehensive disclosure/reporting of all funding received and its use
1.9 Comprehensive disclosure/reporting of environmental sustainability performance
1.10 A robust system of USR monitoring and evaluation and of (publicly) reporting the outcomes of this
2. Governance
2.1 Comprehensive, multi-dimensional annual, internal reporting on Social Responsibility at Board (or equivalent) level
2.2 Exercise of due diligence, risk and impact assessment, avoidance of complicity and compliance with relevant laws, norms and standards
2.3 Board and Senior Management engagement with Social Responsibility
2.4 Permeation of Social Responsibility throughout policy, strategy, procedures and processes at all levels
2.5 Scheme of recognition/reward for Social Responsibility initiatives
2.6 Socially responsible and ethical investment and comprehensive reporting of investments
2.7 Active involvement in relevant sectoral, regional, national and international networks in the sphere of social responsibility
2.8 Provision for staff and student representatives being elected to the Board, or equivalent, as full members
2.9 Provision of representatives of local community/ies and other relevant external stakeholder groups on the Board (or equivalent), or its advisory committees
3. Ethics, Rights, Respect and Justice
3.1 Compliance with UN Declaration of Human Rights and UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights
3.2 Effective and appropriate ethical protocols in teaching and research
3.3 Explicit commitment to widening access and active strategy for this
3.4 Proactivity in providing adequate support services to address specific additional needs and to combat inequalities
3.5 Mechanisms to ensure grievances (internal and external) are addressed and transparent promotion and reporting in respect of these
3.6 Avoidance of discrimination
3.7 Respect for academic freedom
3.8 Due process in respect of discipline, grievance etc
4. Labour & Fair Operating Practices
4.1 Socially responsible recruitment and selection of staff
4.2 Training and Staff Development for Social Responsibility
4.3 Promotion of social responsibility dimension of health, safety and welfare in the workplace
4.4 Freedom of association and collective bargaining
4.5 Socially responsible employee information, consultation and negotiation protocols
4.6 Promotion of non-discriminatory equality of opportunity
4.7 Compliance with ILO Standards, as a minimum
4.8 Ensuring conditions of work comply with relevant national laws, collective agreements and the applicable international labour standards, as a minimum
4.9 Equal pay for work of equal value
4.10 Promotion and maintenance of health, safety and social well-being of the workforce
4.11 Socially responsible procurement, including with regard to workers' rights
4.12 Promotion of social responsibility throughout the sphere of influence eg in terms of anti-corruption policy and practice, responsible political involvement and the value chain
4.13 Compliance with UN Guidelines for Consumer Protection and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
4.14 Compliance with ISO 10001 - 3 inclusive
5. Environmental Responsibility

5.1 Compliance with ISO 14000 and the Rio Declaration
5.2 Robust, socially responsible environmental impact assessments
5.3 A pro-active programme of continuous improvement of clean, eco-efficient and environmentally sound operations
5.4 Prevention of pollution, sustainable resource use and climate change mitigation and adaptation
5.5 Protection of the environment and bio-diversity
6. Democratic Citizenship, Development and Community Involvement
6.1 Promotion of democratic values and processes, of citizenship and of community involvement and community development in and through core activities
6.2 Promotion of democracy, human rights and the rule of law as a defence against the rise of violence, extremism (eg racism, xenophobia), discrimination and intolerance
6.3 Promotion of social cohesion in line with the European Social Charter
6.4 Alignment of policy, strategy and activates with Millennium Development Goals (to 2015)
6.5 Explicit recognition and promotion of the organisation as a stakeholder in its local community/ies
6.6 Policy, strategy and practice which ensures core activities are consistent with notion of "community involvement for community development"
6.7 Pro-active social investment, in partnership with others where appropriate
6.8 Provision of learning opportunities for the vulnerable and/or discriminated
7. Social Responsibility in Teaching, Support for Learning and Research
7.1 Explicit incorporation into curricula of the values and principles of transparency, accountability, human rights, democracy, citizenship, cultural diversity, justice, equality, the rule of law and sustainability
7.2 Explicit commitment to Lifelong Learning and active strategy for this
7.3 Research underpinning teaching and providing foundation for evidence-based decision-making and practice
7.4 Attention to employability issues and active promotion of future employability amongst student population
7.5 Active commitment to and support for student and staff mobility
7.6 Social responsibility in all its dimensions incorporated into all curricula
7.7 Student-centred teaching

4. FORESIGHT OF THE FOCUS GROUP

a. The Focus Group does <u>not</u> aim to check out the situation about the social responsibility of the participants´ organizations or member universities.

b. The Focus Group may collect some opinions on the EU-USR model (presented above), but the focus of the discussion should <u>not</u> be there.

c. The Focus Group will stimulate discussion around the following 5 themes:

1. The type of organizations being capable of mobilizing efforts for USR, i.e., which is their profile as a natural catalyst for this sector.

2. Identifying existing "networks" that focus partly or entirely, directly or indirectly, on USR, at national, European and worldwide levels.

3. If and which gaps exist in sharing best practices and tools in USR, the needs and opportunities of this sector.

4. The extent the proposed draft manifesto for the EU-USR Network is responding to the HE sector needs, i.e., what is its relevance, which priorities are missing or redundant.

5. The participants' evaluations of specific features of the Manifesto to be highlighted by the moderator.