

DiCE Project NEWSLETTER



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In the first edition:

We are happy to introduce the EU-funded project Digital Community Engagement Accelerator for Student Learning and Socio-economic Impact (DiCE). This newsletter aims at providing an overview of the project, the consortium working on it, and the upcoming results.

About DiCE

Get familiar with the activities developed in the project and the four stages that will guide the development of the main results. (Page 2)



Meet the Partners

DiCE brings together five partners from Germany, Italy, Romania, Slovakia and Spain: Accreditation Council for Entrepreneurial and Engaged Universities (ACEEU), Università Telematica Degli Studi (IUL), Helixconnect Europe, Technical University of Kosice (TUKE) and Universidad de Alcalá (UAH) (Page 8)



Upcoming Results

The DiCE Project started in November 2022. The consortium partners are currently working on the first results of the project. The upcoming results are (Page 14):

- A literature review report on digital community engagement.
- Five country reports on digital community engagement: Germany, Italy, Romania, Slovakia and Spain.

Welcome

Message from the Project Coordinator

The COVID-19 pandemic taught us that we can digitalise numerous processes and services, creating many formerly unseen opportunities. Digitalisation is now ubiquitous and universities have not been left out. On the other hand, the third objective of universities is to support the development of society and its communities by serving as a bridge between the scientific community and society. So, by merging these two elements we can identify that there are many challenges for higher education institutions to address.

The engagement with societal stakeholders usually takes place onsite through various activities involving city and regional actors. So, how can we bring community engagement to the digital world to reach more individuals? The DiCE Project has a solution.

The DiCE Project, titled "Digital Community Engagement Accelerator for student learning and socio-economic impact" (2022-1-SK01-KA220-HED-000087668), promotes digitisation and the third mission of universities concurrently.

We will provide concrete practices to educators and course directors on how to create their digital community engagement courses while making an impact on the entire community and enhancing the student learning experience. Using the accelerator approach, typically used in start-ups, we will create an innovative accelerator program to help them develop their digital community engagement courses.

"How can we bring community engagement to the digital world to reach more individuals? The DiCE Project has a solution."

DiCE is also the acronym for Digital Community Engagement. DiCE refers to using digital methodologies and tools when engaging with society (external stakeholders). It encompasses initiatives such as community-based research, place-based engagement, online hackathons, Collaborative Online International Learning, crowdsourcing, citizen science projects, and digital service learning, among others.

The project began in November 2022 and will continue until October 2025. Its consortium is made up of five partners from five countries (learn about us in the Meet the Partners section). To keep you informed, we are excited to present a series of project newsletters that will keep you up to date on the latest project and partnership developments. We will also feature new insights into digital community engagement. Let's get started!

Nina Hadidomova
Technical University of Košice

ABOUT DiCE



The DiCE Project aims at developing a scalable acceleration program to advance the design and implementation of Digital Community Engagement courses for higher education educators and programme directors. The project will gather the latest knowledge to support the advancement of digital community engagement initiatives. The main results the project will produce are:

- 1. Value Maps for Digital Community Engagement**
- 2. Accelerator for Digital Community Engagement**
- 3. Training and Best Practices**
- 4. The DiCE Handbook**

The results of the project will dissect the complex challenge of digitalising community engagement for boosting student learning and social impact.

In this section, we provide an overview of the main expected results of the project.

1. Value Maps for Digital Community Engagement



The value maps will be used as a tool to identify the categories of value for students and society generated by DiCE.

The basis the project:

Value Maps are visual tools used in marketing and business to effectively visualise and analyse the various components that cumulatively create value for certain stakeholders group.

The Value Maps of the DiCE Project provide a framework that educators and course directors can use to assess their courses and identify areas that require improvement, as well as how to advance them. In other words, the Value Maps will contain specific drivers and sub-drivers that will assist them in designing digital community engagement courses.

Before creating the Value Maps, the consortium undertook extensive research. Each of the five partners conducted a comprehensive literature review to identify theoretical approaches and practical instruments for identifying and qualifying student value perceptions and expectations regarding DiCE. The consortium partners examined current trends and developments in university community engagement in Europe and their respective states.

The knowledge gained from the research stage is summarised in the DiCE Literature Review Report, available on our website. In addition, we approached 100 students from the five project countries to understand their views on participating in community engagement and whether they perceive DiCE as a benefit.

Over the coming months, we will utilise the information collected from the literature review and student survey to create two Value Maps. The Value Map for Students Learning will contain information on what students believe teaching should prioritise and their educational priorities. The Value Map for Social Impact will focus on specific activities to improve community engagement.

The Maps will be validated and tested and will serve as the backbone of the project. They will be presented as an interactive online tool and will be readily available for free on the project website. The creation of the Maps will resume in September 2023, with TUKE from Slovakia leading the task.

2. Accelerator for Digital Community Engagement

The digital acceleration platform:

As a first measure to create this accelerator, the project will develop a Manual for Digital Community Engagement Courses, which will lead to the creation of a "Digital Accelerator for Digital Community engagement". The manual and the digital accelerator aim to support and upskill course directors, instruction designers, and university educators by providing guidelines and structured process approaches to create their own DiCE courses. The objectives of this stage of the project are:

- Providing recommendations for educators to design digital community engagement courses in an innovative and engaging style, organising the learning experience in a way that fosters learners' motivation and development.
- Creating a formalised process that the educators could potentially use for creating their own digital community engagement courses. This process will be embedded in the digital accelerator, which articulates different stages, procedures, intermediate goals and outcomes.

The Digital Accelerator will be a guideline that can be adapted and applied to develop structured processes beyond designing community engagement courses, for example in related activities (e.g. entrepreneurial university design process, new skills design process, student empowerment design process, and others).

This accelerator responds to the changing dynamics of interactions among diverse society stakeholders due to digital technologies, which have generated new challenges and opportunities for the creation of strategies for fostering the dialogue between civil society and higher education. The emerging platforms for citizen science projects, online volunteering, crowdsourcing, online fundraising, Civic Tech, and Gov Tech initiatives, are among the emerging trends that need to be integrated into higher education as the new normal.

The digital accelerator for DiCE will be a key support tool to structure the process of integrating digital community engagement into higher education. Additionally, this tool will envision new forms of digital civic engagement not present in traditional onsite community engagement.



Accelerators define, organize, and develop outcomes with an structured process.

3. Training and Best Practices



The workshop equips the participants with the knowledge and competencies to excel in DiCE.

The acceleration in action:

With this result, the DiCE Project aims to achieve a Digital Accelerator Pilot Training on the Accelerator and a Best Practice Report.

The piloting phase consists of a workshop to equip the participants with the knowledge and competencies to excel in digital community engagement and create value for student learning and social impact. This stage of the project prepares and trains the university staff that will use the accelerator platform by introducing them to the Value Maps and the Accelerator. The project pursues three main objectives with this workshop and training.

1. Testing and validating the Digital accelerator before full-scale implementation.
2. Upskilling and training university staff in digital community engagement.
3. Providing success stories and expert recommendations for the effective developments of the methodology.

Moreover, the piloting will foster awareness about DiCE, help build a community around the project and strengthen key partnerships.

The platform will be tested by educators of three higher education institutions of the consortium during a three-day workshop with activities run by digital community engagement experts from our consortium. Participants will work on ideas and solutions for real-life situations (existing courses and study programs), leading to direct improvements. The use of the digital accelerator will contribute to the objective of the project: to design very individual DiCE courses and provide better student learning by increasing their support for societal development.

The Best Practices Report will collect successful stories about the participants who joined the digital accelerator workshop experience. It will analyse the best practices identified during the project lifetime with a focus on achievements demonstrated by the Digital accelerator participants who took part in the workshop. The major results and takeaways will be presented in a Digital Accelerator Launch Event and at higher education conferences on community engagement, third mission, and digital innovations.

This result of the project will contribute to the general objectives of the project by impacting the willingness to replicate the methodology.

4. The DiCE Handbook

Strategies and recommendations:

The Handbook will be a pioneer reference on Digital Community Engagement in higher education. This book will provide strategies and policy recommendations for course directors to embed the value-based management approach and implement digital community engagement courses. Moreover, the Handbook will also impact the ability and willingness of course directors and university educators to use the results of this project (i.e. the Value Maps and the Digital Accelerator) and to replicate its methodology. The objectives of this result are:

1. Providing course directors and university educators with insights about the DiCE Project and the digital accelerator.
2. Disseminating the results of the project and generating interest in the topic of digital community engagement.

The DiCE Handbook will inspire new practitioners of higher education to implement their digital engagement strategies. The recommendations, experiences, and tools will constitute a valuable resource.

The Handbook will collect strategies and policy recommendations for educators as well as university leadership staff at all levels. It will focus on embedding the value-based management approach, facilitating practices and supporting the implementation of digital community engagement improvements. University leaders will find the advice for reinforcing project achievements by setting priorities, enacting policies, implementing strategies, and channelling resources to support and proliferate digital community engagement practices in their institutions.

The DiCE Handbook represents a significant milestone in higher education's efforts to leverage digital tools and platforms for community engagement. The Handbook will foster a culture of continuous improvement and innovation by disseminating the results of the project and generating interest in the strategies to promote engagement digitally. By inspiring practitioners of higher education to implement their digital engagement strategies, the Handbook will contribute to the development of more engaged, inclusive, and impactful higher education systems.



The DiCE Handbook will inspire practitioners of higher education to implement their digital engagement strategies.

MEET THE PARTNERS!



The DICE Project brings together three higher education institutions from Italy, Slovakia, and Spain, and two organisations from Germany and Romania. This consortium represents different realities and levels of penetration of digital community engagement, which provides a rich ground for the discussion. The consortium partners are:

1. Technical University of Kosice (TUKE)
2. University of Alcalá (UAH)
3. Italian University Line (IUL)
4. ACEEU
5. HELIXCONNECT EUROPE

On the 1st and 2nd of December 2022, the project consortium met in Kosice (Slovakia) to kick off the project. For the next three years, the consortium will work together to develop collaboratively the diverse outputs of the project, under the coordination of the Technical University of Kosice.



TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY OF KOSICE (TUKE)

The Technical University of Košice (TUKE) was founded in 1952 to meet the educational and research needs of Eastern Slovakia. The University aims to maintain a harmonious and interdependent relationship between its teaching, research, and community engagement services. As a public university, TUKE has strong ties with private and public institutions, enabling it to respond to their needs as well as the requirements of society in general.

Presently, TUKE offers educational and research activities across nine faculties: the Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Informatics; the Faculty of Mining, Ecology, Process Control and Geotechnology; the Faculty of Materials, Metallurgy and Recycling; the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering; the Faculty of Civil Engineering; the Faculty of Economics; the Faculty of Manufacturing Technologies; the Faculty of Arts; and the Faculty of Aeronautics.

The current number of students exceeds 16,000, with approximately 13,000 full-time students, including 8,500 Bachelor students, 4,000 Master students, and over 500 PhD students. Nearly 900 teachers, along with an equivalent number of research and administrative staff, work at the university. In recent years, there has been a significant increase in demand from foreign students, with students from forty countries attending the University.

TUKE is constantly striving to improve and acquire up-to-date knowledge by implementing projects that benefit its students, employees, and the wider community. It is actively pursuing the third mission of universities and avoiding the "ivory tower" label. Participating in the DiCE Project is, therefore, a wise decision for TUKE, as the project will help achieve the university's goal of serving as a bridge between academia and the community.

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UNIVERSITY OF ALCALÁ (UAH)

Universidad de Alcalá (UAH) was founded in 1499 and it is one of the oldest universities in Spain. It is located in Alcalá de Henares, a UNESCO world heritage site, thirty kilometres from the centre of Madrid. UAH is a modern institution offering a wide range of undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes adapted to the European Higher Education Area and covering all fields of knowledge, from the humanities to engineering, and from the social sciences to experimental and biomedical sciences.



The activities of UAH take place across its three different campuses: two in the city of Alcalá de Henares in the region of Madrid and one in Guadalajara, which belongs to another Spanish administrative region, Castilla La Mancha.

UAH has developed a strategic line to promote a comprehensive education and ethical-social commitment to the surrounding environment, working towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda through training that promotes the common good and social justice. To achieve this, it promotes combining university teaching with social action and community service.

At UAH there is a growing interest in the implementation of Community Engagement and Service-Learning methodologies as part of the teaching programme of subjects and the development of projects. This active learning methodology allows university teaching to be combined with social action and community service, favouring both the academic and personal growth of students, as well as a greater projection of the teaching activity of the teaching staff.

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ITALIAN UNIVERSITY LINE (IUL)

IUL (Italian University Line) is an online university that boasts more than a decade of experience in the provision and organisation of online courses. IUL University is located in Florence, Italy, with exam venues across the whole country, which allows a real connection with the territory. IUL has developed a real online Model of community engagement. The main feature of the courses offered by IUL is the entirely online nature of the teaching. IUL offers an entirely online teaching service, i.e. based on distance learning courses.

The characteristic of the courses is an innovative teaching model which is based on online lessons in synchronous and asynchronous modes. The courses provide a certain number of hours for online teaching credits based on the video recording of lessons, which the teacher prepares and video records before the start of the course. The IUL model then supports these video-recorded lessons with synchronous meetings, i.e. remotely but in real-time, in which the topics developed in the recorded video lessons are taken up and studied in depth with the students.

The innovative richness of the IUL teaching model emerges from these principles: it is an entirely online teaching, teaching, assessment and research model. For these reasons the IUL model is particularly suited to work online and on the Internet, and to position itself in the digital field as a very serious and promising model.

Because of the online nature of IUL University, an intrinsic inclination towards digital community engagement is present. DiCE can be seen as a facilitator of the community engagement process of the university. DiCE can help IUL to create a stimulating learning environment with the possibility to self-aggregation according to the individual need and priorities.

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ACCREDITATION COUNCIL FOR ENTREPRENEURIAL AND ENGAGED UNIVERSITIES

The Accreditation Council for Entrepreneurial and Engaged Universities (ACEEU) is the only globally-operating quality assurance body with a focus on engagement and entrepreneurship in Higher Education. ACEEU is committed to lead the way in a new era for higher education through evaluating, supporting and igniting the potential of higher education institutions on their road to third mission excellence.



Headquartered in Germany, ACEEU offers accreditation for entrepreneurship and (community) engagement on institutional (entire university) and divisional level (faculty, school, department). Universities engaging in ACEEU accreditation are united by their excellence in entrepreneurship and engagement, no matter if top 1% world university, or less known regionally-oriented institution.

ACEEU was founded with the mission to increase the direct social, economic and environmental impacts that universities make in their ecosystems. The goal is to challenge the status quo in higher education and advocate for putting a stronger emphasis on the so-called third mission of universities (an umbrella term for innovation, university-business cooperation, civic engagement, outreach, technology transfer etc.), next to education and research, to make universities engines for societal and economic development.

ACEEU is actively developing diverse interactive solutions for higher education institutions to promote entrepreneurship and engagement: web-based evaluation systems, dashboards, training programs, and toolkits. These tools are open to public use on a dedicated website (<https://toolkit.aceeu.org/>). This experience will contribute to unleashing the potential of community engagement in higher education.

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HELIXCONNECT EUROPE

HELIXCONNECT EUROPE emerged in 2020 (stemming from decentralised efforts from 2018) as a need for a better hands-on approach to facilitating innovation, helping organisations grow and enabling a proper integration among innovators, NGOs, industry and government. HELIXCONNECT EUROPE works under an international advisory board composed of leading influencers from industry, innovation and policy-making sectors to devise tailored and applied solutions for organisations.

Helixconnect (HELIX) provides a hands-on approach to facilitating innovation, helping organisations grow and enabling a proper integration among innovators, NGOs, industry and government. Our vision is to bridge global innovation systems and enable global knowledge and technology transfer. With the up-rise of modern technologies and organisational performance frameworks, massive shifts and business model innovations are required in order to transform organisations to stay competitive while ensuring that they reach their intended impact in a fair and responsible manner. Our research and commercialisation staff are experienced academics (PhD level) with reputable scientific profiles coined via publications, knowledge transfer to the market and top-level consulting activities. We employ responsible research and innovation processes in all our work to ensure the impactful commercialisation of the research output.

With the up-rise of modern technologies and organisational performance frameworks, massive shifts and business model innovations are required in order to transform organisations to stay competitive while ensuring that they reach their intended impact in a fair and responsible manner. In the same way, the strategies for engaging with societal stakeholders have changed and need to be updated with digital technologies, strategies and processes. The DiCE Project is key to advance in the modernisation of societal collaboration.

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UPCOMING RESULTS



The DiCE Project is in its foundation stage, in which the research component is building the basis. For this phase, the partners are working on reviewing the literature, policies and diverse practices in their countries, as a strategy for setting up the scene. The main results that are ready to disseminate are:

1. Literature Review Report on Digital Community Engagement.
2. Five country reports on digital community engagement: Germany, Italy, Romania, Slovakia and Spain.

These results present a broad panorama of the trends, risks, practices, and recommendations in the field of digital community engagement in higher education and are a key insight to approach the topic from a global and a country perspective.

Additionally, the partners of the project will enhance these results with a validation survey and the development of the Value Maps. By the end of this first stage, the DiCE Project will be ready to start building the Digital Accelerator.

Literature Review Report on Digital Community Engagement

This report is an excellent brief introduction to Digital Community Engagement in higher education, its trends, benefits and recommendations



The consolidation of Digital Community Engagement strategies can help universities to broaden their activities, implement experience learning, and enable them to connect with society. This is a complex challenge because it is not a matter of translating traditional community engagement practices into online environments, it implies defining the new forms of digital interactions and practices among students, institutions, and society.

This report summarises five literature reviews on Digital Community Engagement in higher education with a country focus on Germany, Italy, Romania, Slovakia, and Spain. Its aim is to provide an overview of DiCE by identifying the current trends, benefits, risks and key recommendations for its implementation. The findings set the basis for the development of the DiCE Project and are also useful for providing higher education stakeholders with an introduction to DiCE.

To advance DiCE, the report recommends facilitating digital competencies in pedagogical work, developing synergies with already existing programs, encouraging collaboration and partnership, generating data on digital engagement, creating support structures, visibilising university DiCE initiatives, and creating roadmaps for educators and program managers on how to implement courses with DiCE components.

[Download the Report](#)

Country Reports on Digital Community Engagement

Germany, Italy, Romania, Slovakia, and Spain present a panorama of the developments and discussions on Digital Community Engagement.

The five country reports present specific perspectives on the state of Digital Community Engagement in Germany, Italy, Romania, Slovakia, and Spain. This report will support the higher education institutions belonging to the consortium in providing a panorama to their educators and programme managers. Additionally, they will serve as a reference point for benchmarking other contexts.

The country reports are structured in trends of community engagement, digital community engagement in each country, risks and benefits associated, and the recommendations to advance the topic. Each of the reports provides local examples and experiences that showcase how digital initiatives in community engagement are spread across diverse institutional units and courses. Additionally, the reports allow the reader to picture the variety of strategies that universities are using for dealing with the need of enhancing their ecosystem engagement in the teaching and learning mission.



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[Consult the Reports](#)

Thank You



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Website

<https://www.diceaccelerator.eu/>

Consortium Partners:



**TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY
OF KOŠICE**



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