

Challenge-based learning:



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



Community Engagement at the Arvo Pärt Centre

Background

In the second year of their masters' studies, the students of cultural management at the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre can choose an optional internship. The MA curriculum is designed to prepare “professional managers of arts organizations with creative leadership skills and vision; entrepreneurs promoting Estonian cultural industries in an international context; administrators and decision-makers in the field of cultural policy and creative industries strategies, who are able to work in and understand the working mechanisms of different cultural fields” (EAMT Curriculum 2018). The curriculum has been balanced to offer both theoretical and practical education in the field, and the programme is considered unique thanks to its small number of students (18 students, admitted every other year), its collaboration with the Estonian Business School to offer a combination of economics, management and arts field specifics, and its international atmosphere, which helps give a feel for the specifics of various cultures and communities.

Since 2013, one of the focus areas of the program has been the area of societal impact in the arts, social engagement and arts methods for societal engagement. This research-based development has been formed into a selective specialization module entitled Managing Arts Projects with Societal Impact (MAPSI). The module consists of a week-long intensive MAPSI Academy (5 ECTS), an e-course (5 ECTS) and a MAPSI internship (5 ECTS). The selective module builds on the previous learning outcomes of all other courses (Project Management, Leadership, Service Design, Cultural Theories, Media Relations and many others). The MAPSI Internship project is designed in the curriculum to connect previous knowledge to practice. At the same time, the MAPSI internship comprises challenge-based learning (CBL) aimed at preparing future cultural managers to cope with complexity and uncertainty, to recognize, set and analyze problems, and to solve them not FOR the clients/partners but WITH them. Each MAPSI internship semester is unique, as the number of participating students varies. The challenges and the partners are never the same; the educational input and methods are not predetermined, and the practical implementation is never pre-planned by curriculum designers. Instead, it is co-created with the students and challenge owners (stakeholders/arts organizations).

The selection of partners for MAPSI internships (the challenge owners) is the purview of the academic staff of the program, and is based on alumni networks, as many graduates are currently in leading positions at key local arts and cultural organizations. The prerequisite for choosing a cooperation partner for the challenge-solving course is their interest in collaboration and their need to tackle a specific societal issue related to the organization.

The aims of the challenge-solving mentorship are multiple. The aim for students is to learn to identify and analyze key challenges in a practical setting, and to be able to define and set goals for their own activity based on the identified challenges facing the target organization. Moreover, the aim was to experiment with art-based methods in solving the challenge. The overall curricular aims of the MAPSI internship were: to promote professional skills for responsible and professional working methods; to assess activities and obtain competences in multi-professional cooperation; and to strengthen the students' expertise within the Managing Art Projects with Societal Impact area. The official learning goals are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1 Learning goals

After the challenge-solving course the student:

- is able to take responsibility for and reflect on their strengths and weaknesses as a cultural manager in practical work situations.*
- has acquired a responsible and professional way of working,*
- is able to assess their own activities,*
- has improved their competences in multi-professional cooperation,*
- has strengthened their expertise within the Managing Art Projects with Societal Impact area.*

In the academic year 2017-2018, four cultural management students decided to enroll in the MAPSI internship. Before choosing the selective, they had not participated in other MAPSI module courses. While choosing the course, they did not know what the challenge was or what organization they would work with. Although in other cases a student can carry out their internship individually, in challenge solving the idea is also to learn teamwork and combine students' competences. The course started in October and lasted until the beginning of May.

Challenge owner

The “challenge owner” organization chosen for the MAPSI internship was the Arvo Pärt Centre. The director of the centre is a graduate of the Cultural management program with experience both in management and in higher education. The centre was entering a new era as it moved into new purpose-built premises, and there were several new challenges for the students to work on. Feelings of trust and an open and friendly relationships between the academy staff and the organization already existed. In the preparatory meeting, the concept of the challenge-solving course was explained, and it was agreed that the challenge itself would be decided in conjunction with the students.

The centre aims to systematize, promote and perpetuate the legacy of Arvo Pärt, and was founded in 2010 in Laulasmaa by members of the composer’s family. “The Arvo Pärt Centre combines the composer’s personal archive with an information and music centre. It is an open meeting place for musicians, researchers and music lovers—for anyone interested in Arvo Pärt’s music and world of ideas.” (APC Website, 2019) The center is 35 kilometres from Tallinn, in a pine forest near the sea. The new building, featuring magnificent prize-winning architecture by APC, was opened in October 2018, after the completion of the challenge-solving course.

At the time of the challenge-solving course (October 2017-May 2018), the building was under construction and not yet open to the public. The center was still operating in the original small Aliina building right next to the construction site. The staff of the centre was busy making preparations, from choosing the furniture and organizing the moving of the archive to strategic planning of the season after opening and creating the concepts of the centre’s programme and services. At the time, the centre was not open to the general public, but did offer space for researchers to work in the archive.

Arvo Pärt is an Estonian composer of international stature. His unique music, acknowledged and admired throughout the world, is characterized by its “strong compositional logic and sacral atmosphere”(EMIC, 2019). Pärt was considered the boldest innovator of 1960s Estonian music for adopting modernist techniques in his early compositions. Later, he became recognized for his meditative tintinnabuli style. “Arvo Pärt, has, for the eighth year in a row, been given the title of the ‘world’s most performed living composer’ by the classical music event database, Bachtrack.” (Tambur, 2019) The composer is known for his unique philosophy of life and its expression in his compositions. “His *tintinnabuli* works show a very personal approach to sound, silence and word. Pärt’s oeuvre has left an important mark in the history of 20th-century music.” (APC website, 2019) His music is strongly rooted in the sacred, intimate, personal perspectives of his faith, yet speaks to a very wide audience. “Throughout his compositions, Arvo Pärt has

sought the congruity of music with universal laws of harmony and a Pythagorean notion of the cosmos' numerical structure." (Siitan, [Preprint]). Siitan has noted that children have often been the intended audience of Pärt's compositions. He has written that: "Pärt relied more on general principles than on 'experiences'." (Siitan, [Preprint]) Pärt is well-known for his serial technique of "structural patterns that often repeat". Siitan continues: "Already in the 1960s, the composer experimented with various means of structuring that pass from work to work and later shaped his compositions in the *tintinnabuli* style." (Siitan, [Preprint]) At the same time, Pärt reflects the surrounding world in his music as well: "Pärt, whom the media has portrayed as being more like a hermetic monk, had also issued strong surprise political statements before, comparing, for example, the 7 October 2006 murder of Anna Politkovskaya to the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and dedicating all performances of his works to the journalist's memory during the 2006/2007 season." (Siitan, [Preprint]) The key words used to describe Pärt's music are sacred, silence, solidity, simplicity and humbleness.

The principles of Pärt's composition and his philosophy of life have imbued the Arvo Pärt Centre with a special set of values that guide its practices and contribute to every decision. The role of Arvo Pärt as the key figure in the centre's operations is even more emphatic as the composer is closely involved in the centre's work. The organizational vision, strategies, aims and activities are all sustained by the influence of his music and its meaning, with a strong connection to his philosophical statements and values. "The Arvo Pärt Centre is not just an organization, it is the physical representation of Arvo Pärt's creative legacy—a place of inspiration, creativity, dedication, connectivity and concentration." (Students' report, May 2018)

The personal values of the composer were discussed at the first meeting between the APC manager and the students participating in the course. The manager conveyed the main principles that the composer, as well as the centre, proceed from. The importance of nature and the composer's strong religious and philosophical grounding were stressed. These values guide the everyday activities and decision making of APC. For example, the decision to position the new building among the existing trees and adapt to the natural surroundings as much as possible was a very conscious and deliberate choice. APC managed to convince the architects to acknowledge and honor the landscape and plants, and the natural surroundings were damaged as little as possible. Also, the new building has a small chapel inside, which reflects the belief that every person should retain a place for the sacred and spiritual inside. The tower for viewing the peaceful natural surroundings accentuates the importance of connecting with and observing the environment. These and other similar principles have grown to become part of the APC mindset and anchor the activities and strategies of the entire organization.

One strategic aspect the manager pointed out was linked to the new concept of the centre, building **around** the person and his values, no building a museum **to him**. The organization has striven to find how to establish the concept of the centre, how to deliver its values to society, and how not to become a museum but an active centre promoting this specific mindset and philosophy.

The process:

The first meeting between the students and the Arvo Pärt Centre manager was organized at the centre, and a visit to the construction site was conducted. This allowed the students to better understand what the setting was and who the challenge owners were, and to make sense of the organization. During the visit, a preliminary understanding of the challenges at hand was established, but the students needed to reflect afterwards exactly what challenge to adopt and how to define it. They identified several key challenges (Table 2).

Table 2 Key challenges for Arvo Pärt Centre

Question		Comments	
1st challenge	How to involve the local community?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish trust relations with the local community • Distinguish different target groups among locals • Get to know the needs and expectations of locals 	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What method should be used: community engagement or community outreach? 	
2nd challenge	How to communicate to the Estonian music world?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • APC does not want to be used as a marketing tool; • Others may feel that the centre is taking finances away from other the organizations 	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperation on international, national and local levels. 	

3rd challenge	How to cope with the organizational changes (new workers, collaborators etc.)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to retain a “cozy” atmosphere in the big building after moving? • Communicate (marketing & promotion) that it is not just a visitor attraction, but a place to spend time
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay focused on the place and its surroundings.
4th challenge	How to communicate the values of Arvo Pärt Centre?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver the message to the public that the centre is a playful/creative place not only for music specialists and not only about Arvo Pärt • Explore options for different future projects such as theatre performances, choir camps etc.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • APC does not want to offer only concert performances; the visitor should experience something extra.

(Students' final report 2018)

The identification of the challenge(s) and the setting of goals took place only after the first meeting with the challenge owner. The questions “what to do” and “why” were not set by the supervisors or the director. This was in part to encourage the students to discover the challenge and the avenues to work on it themselves, following the principle of learning, and further encouraging the competences needed in the students' future professional life. Cultural managers often have to come up with their own new projects and initiate processes without having set tasks or clarified goals. The visit prompted the students to start to explore the specificity of the organization, and the composer's life and worldview. They also mapped some potential challenges to solve that came up at the meeting with the director. The students summarized the situation as follows:

“The centre has been in the process of establishing itself and building up its archive since 2010, but with the move to the new building it will face many challenges, one of which is connected to the local area and local-level engagement. Therefore they introduced these challenges to the Cultural Management Masters students of the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre and asked them to develop a concept and framework

for working with the local community” (Students’ final report 2018).

After the first site visit, students were given tools and guidelines to help to structure their project plan and work on the schedule. The guidelines included suggestions for questions of what to bear in mind for certain aspects (Table 3).

Table 3. Guidelines for project preparation

Description of the context (challenge owners) What are the main goals and contexts of the organization? Try to analyze this thoroughly so the actions you plan to undertake logically derive from the situation described.

Description of the (societal) challenge chosen: *Scale (macro / mid-size / micro), owners, stakeholders. Why is it important for you? How can your involvement benefit you as an artist?*

Description of the team: *Division of responsibilities at different stages of the process.*

Plan for approaching/solving/facing this challenge: *Who should be involved in developing the plan? Define the goals of the action you want to undertake. What can you as a team do for the challenge? What are the methods you are going to use to solve the challenge? What are the expected results (if applicable)? What do you hope to gain?*

Resources: *What kind of resources will you need during the project? Consider materials, space, time, support, financing, etc. Include what it is that you need from the facilitator and from the organization.*

Timetable: *Please include the preliminary action plan and deliverables.*

Documentation and Evaluation: Identify the methods of collecting information that are best suited to your project. *Think how you will collect feedback to check if you achieved the goals. What kind of materials and data should you collect during the project? Who is responsible for the documentation? How do you evaluate your actions?*

PRESENTATION *Besides presenting the deliverables, include your own discussions, ideas, obstacles, challenges, etc. Be critical in evaluating your actions. Say what happened during your process. Talk about transformations, changes and the goals you reached. Say also what is still open and unresolved. Remember your feelings and emotions, tell us how you*

The students selected their challenge and aim and stated it thus: “The goal of our project is to work out a strategy for involving locals through different kinds of activity. The outcome of the project will be a written strategy that will consist of three different main topics: research, activities for engaging locals, and a communication and marketing plan to execute and implement the activities proposed.” (Students’ report, October 2017) The student team then organized itself and assigned individual roles to each participant.

The student team had meetings with the supervisor, who also provided suggestions, such as to do further research on the project background and study various (art-based) methods as options to be used in the process of engaging the organization’s local community. For examples, students were introduced to some existing tools and frameworks, whereas others came from their own experiments in teamwork, for example design thinking and storytelling or the use of LEGO figures and framing the visit or journey. Students were free to use whatever they felt to be appropriate with the organization’s representatives, but they had to argue their choices in the final written report. It was seen as important to encourage students to experiment with art-based methods, as this was one of the main aims of the course. Some of the students had previous knowledge of the methods, having participated in a service design course.

The team decided on the use of two methods: a forest walk with meditation and a visitor journey focus group. The environment of the Arvo Pärt Centre and the strong values placed on nature and the forest prompted the students to incorporate these values in their methods. *The idea to organize an event incorporating a forest walk and meditation derived from the philosophy that Arvo Pärt himself has demonstrated in his life and music. He has said that silence “is like a living organism, just like truth; which is not ‘it’, but ‘who’. If you are surrounded by constant noise, then the furthest thing from you is silence.”* (Liimet, 2017)

The forest walk was used to explore how nature and the forest could be more effectively emphasized in the centre’s activities and engagement with local residents. The challenge owner participated in the activity.

The second method—the visitor journey—was used in a workshop with local teachers, as locals schoolchildren were identified as one of the centre’s main target groups. As the students stated: *“As our goal was to understand the key stages of customers’ experiences and their expectations, we decided to use one of the service design methods—a Customer Journey Map (CJM). A Customer Journey Map (CJM) is a visual depiction of*

the sequence of events through which customers may interact with a service organization during the entire purchase process. A CJM lists all possible organizational touch-points customers may encounter during the service exchange process (Rosenbaum, Otalora and Ramírez, 2017). This seemed the most logical tool to use because we could cover all the necessary topics for the Arvo Pärt Centre within a very clear framework.” (Students’ final report 2018)

The students reflected on the methods and the results of the project in the following way: *“From our findings, most important is to bring out the importance of service that is connected with how and what information is received, maintaining active communication before, on site, and after the visit, but also including service that is suitable for different clients (e.g. a lower clothes rack for kindergarten children). We need to keep in mind that study visits are not compulsory and there are lots of other possibilities, and therefore it is necessary to stand out.” (Students’ final report 2018)*

To summarize the Arvo Pärt Centre case, a poster was created and presented to HEISE stakeholders (Figure 1)



Arvo Pärt Centre

EESTI
MUUSIKA- JA TEATRIKADEEMIA

Cultural Management and Humanities
Music and Theatre Academy of Estonia, Tallinn

HEISE

Higher Education
Institution for
Societal Engagement

Statement

Arvo Pärt Centre, an arts organisation and scientific archive dedicated to the famous Estonian composer, is building its new premises into a rural area by the forest and seaside in a small village of Laulasmaa, Estonia.

Research question - How to involve local community?

Concept

- establish trustful relations with local community;
- distinguish different target groups among locals;
- getting to know the needs and expectations of locals;
- what method should be used: community engagement or community outreach?

The main connection point with the local community is through nature, children and families!

children → local schools/kindergartens → (music) teachers

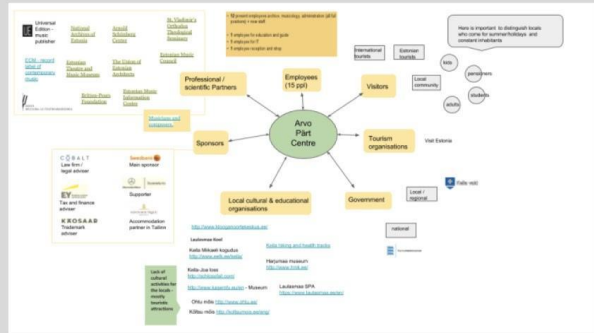
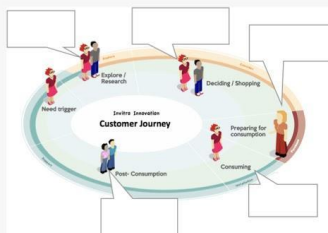
Method

1. Forest walk meditation



2. Focus group interview using customer journey framework:

- Local educational institutions
- Looking for practical part of engaging them → This approach concerns the service side → Wanted to understand the key stages of customers' experiences and their expectations → Used one of the service design methods → A Customer Journey Map (6 phases).



Results

I Forest Walk: usage of surrounding nature and meditation to learn about the inner 'silence' → based on the Arvo Pärt philosophy

+advantages

- could be used as an additional activity to concert events;
- is a good activity for the low-season time (autumn/winter);
- the feedback session inside the Centre would create more connection with the Centre.

- limitations

- more suitable for the outside visitors or tourists;
- suitable for a group not more than 15 people.

II Interview:

+advantages

- Focus group interview with representatives of nearby schools/ kindergartens gave the center an overview of their potential customers on local level and helped to determine their hopes, fears and expectation in connection with APC.
- Method can be carried out with different focus-groups.
- Understandable method – easy to relate for interviewees.

- limitations

- Time-consuming to prepare and carry out.



Short bio & contacts

Marina Pavljuk - marinapavljuk@gmail.com

Marta Hang – hang.marta@gmail.com

Mari Köhler - k6hler@gmail.com

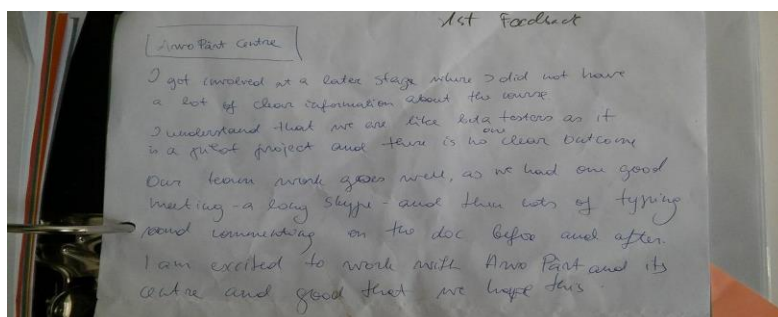
Evaluation and analysis of the pilot on challenge solving

In order to evaluate the pilot, during the process student feedback and feedback from the supervisor and challenge owner were collected regularly, both formally and informally. Participating students wrote their feedback twice during the process, and at the end there was a joint reflection session with the challenge owner. The supervisors were in constant contact with the students, so individual feedback and comments were also collected on an ongoing basis.

Informally, it could be detected that at the beginning a sense of excitement with regard to the new task and learning format was felt among students and supervisors alike, and the challenge owner was open and curious. However, the worry of not knowing what the outcomes, process or even the next steps might be created some sense of uneasiness.

The first formal feedback was collected after the first meetings between the challenge owner and the student team, and the team meeting with the supervisors (see examples below). The students' feedback clearly reports how the vagueness and high uncertainty of the process creates worries for them and they see the need for more support. However, this can be seen as one of the vital learning moments of the process—learning to tolerate vagueness and uncertainty and cope with it.

On the other hand, the supervisors also had feelings of uneasiness and did offer tools and methods to cope with the uncertainty. However, they restrained themselves from getting too involved and tried only to offer tools rather than starting to work with the team. In addition, the supervisors voiced some concerns about the equality of the teamwork.



Informal feedback is received during meetings with students after the planning phase and the emotions prompted by uncertainty are discussed. However, no solutions as such are offered to the students. From the formal feedback, problems with the internal teamwork and the unequal distribution of tasks can be detected. Issues of time management are voiced, yet overall interest and happiness with the task and the challenge owner are emphasized.

The supervisors try to discuss the responsibilities and roles in the team, but no further changes to the team are made. From informal discussions, some worries about the team and its functioning can be detected. Overall, the role of the supervisors seems to be unclear to students, and their expectations of more direct involvement from supervisors are not met.

The challenge owner is friendly and responsive, but constantly busy with the extra work involved in the opening of the the new center.

In summary, the students still find it important and rewarding to work on the case, although it is challenging to find time for the project due to other workloads. Students expect clear, regular and extensive contact with supervisors; and the provision of all kinds of information in the first half of the process is necessary. The engagement of HEIs with real organizational challenges could be undertaken earlier and there could also be engagement between the departments of the academy itself. In general, **students consider this type of engagement project as a good indication of an HEI's societal impact.** The evaluation of challenge-solving processes as an indicator of an HEI's societal engagement could be based mostly on ex post surveys regarding project implications and two-way feedback.

The third stage of formal feedback is collected at the end of the project and it consists of the supervisor's diary—notes, student feedback and notes from the final meetings. Analysis reveals several concerns regarding the process.

The students point out the stringent schedule, the need to work independently, and the uncertainty, yet are pleased with the flexibility offered during the pilot to prolong the process, for example in statements such as *“one semester is too little, and the flexibility to prolong is much needed”*.

The supervisor finds that resistance to using art-based methods is still very high with both students and the challenge owner. Moreover, having an art organization as the challenge owner might make this even more difficult, as the following statement points

out: *“Professional art organizations cannot use amateur art in challenge-solving sessions.”* Thus the aim of using art-based methods was not attained in the pilot. In addition, the supervisor is worried that the pilot might not have provided a clear challenge and solution path, and might have been more like a normal project with consultancy. She wishes for: *“more true collaboration and co-creation; it turned out more as a consultancy service for the organization, but what should we do in order to design the process more as a co-creation?”* However, the pilot also provided some indication as to how this could be achieved with closer physical proximity—students staying at the challenge owner’s premises, for example. The identification of the challenge is also voiced as a concern by the challenge owner, who reflects that they themselves do not know what challenges to pose. Thus, the challenge owner is not necessarily the best person to define the challenge and more time and flexibility should be allocated to the discovery of the actual challenge.

On the other hand, when the pilot is looked at as a learning experience, statements that are more positive emerge. Such as “students feel the relevance and importance of a real-life task. They learn a lot from the challenge owner”, or “the process was useful as it pushed us to think about the things we have to consider anyway”.

To conclude, we wish to highlight the need for better structure to the process, better information, and better management of expectations, both in practical terms with regard to time usage and in the need to cope with uncertainty.

References

Arvo Pärt (2006, updated 2010) Available at <https://www.emic.ee/?sisu=heli-loojad&mid=58&id=61&lang=eng&action=view&method=biograafia>

Arvo Pärt center –web pages at <https://www.arvopart.ee/en/>

Cultural Management –program, curriculum, Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre at. https://www.ema.edu.ee/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/EAMT_EBS-CM-curriculum-2018-2020.pdf Estonian Music Information Center, EMIC (2019) at <https://www.emic.ee/emic>

Liimet, A. (2017) Filosoofia ja muusikaga häälestatud maailm, Ööülikool, available at (from original)

Rosenbaum, M., Otalora, L. and G. Ramírez (2017) How to create a realistic customer journey map, *Business Horizons*, 2017, vol. 60, issue 1, 143-150

Siitan, T. 2017. “Sounding structure, structured sound – Sounding the Sacred”. Conference of the Sacred Arts Initiative, the Arvo Pärt Project at St. Vladimir’s Seminary. The Orthodox Christian Studies Center of Fordham University, Fordham’s Lincoln Center campus, New York, USA, 01.–04.05.2017. <https://www.sacredartsinitiative.com/soundingvideos/2018/6/17/tintinnabuli-in-musical-and-geopolitical-context>. Retrieved 14.04.2019.

Student report: Arvo Pärt case, October 2017, unpublished study report, EAMT

Student report: Arvo Pärt case, May 2019, unpublished final study report, EAMT

Tambur, S. (2019) Arvo Pärt is the world’s most performed living composer eight years running at <http://estonianworld.com/culture/arvo-part-is-the-worlds-most-performed-living-composer-eighth-year-running/>

Reference for quotation

Ateca-Amestoy, V.; Äyväri, A.; Eskelinen, A.; Johansson, T.; Jyrämä, A.; Kanervo, R.; Kein, A.; Kiitsak-Prikk, K.; Plaza, B.; Pusa, T.; Ranczakowska, A.; Sarlio-Siintola, S.; Sassi, M.; Simjanovska, V.; Tasser, C. (2019). Roadmap for Societal Engagement for Higher Education Institutions. *Higher Education Institution for Societal Engagement*. HEISE Project, Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership.