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Recommendations for Service-Learning

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1 Introduction

The Transform4Europe university alliance includes a total of seven European partner universities that share a common vision of shaping the future of Europe. The alliance's work focuses on the areas of digitalization, ecology and sustainability as well as social change and inclusion. The alliance is being supported by the European Union. A knowledge based entrepreneurial approach is applied to higher education with the aim of training knowledge entrepreneurs.

The Service-Learning sub-project based at Saarland University acts as a link to create the foundation for the training of knowledge entrepreneurs through the innovative teaching form of Service-Learning. These can then initiate and shape transformation processes in Europe. The aim of the sub-project is to develop a concept for anchoring Service-Learning and Community Research in teaching at Saarland University and thus to create innovative study programs that further develop and strengthen contact with the economy and society in the sense of the Third Mission at universities and colleges.

Service-Learning as an innovative teaching format combines university learning for students with community service in the local environment of their university. In this way, Service-Learning offers hands-on learning experiences, promotes students' social engagement and personal development and thus enables a win-win situation in which education and community development go hand in hand to encourage individual and collective growth.

As part of the sub-project, in addition to theoretical research on Service-Learning, a survey was carried out at Saarland University and other German universities, in which questions were asked about Service-Learning offers and their quality. Furthermore, university didactic measures were also taken to make the teaching format better known among lecturers and to support its use in university teaching. Moreover, at an academic level, the opportunity was also taken to exchange ideas about Service-Learning, e.g. at conferences and in a working meeting with employees and co-thinkers from the partner universities. The knowledge gained and materials produced in this sub-project are shared with the partner universities so that all partner universities benefit from them. The Service-Learning sub-project at Saarland University thus sets a clear European focus in the sense of the Transform4Europe Alliance.

The recommendations for action presented here were developed as part of the Service-Learning sub-project at Saarland University on the basis of other project results and the exchange with employees from the other universities. The goal is to pass on these recommendations within the Transform4Europe network and thereby create a basis for profitable Service-Learning at all Alliance locations.

2 The concept of Service-Learning

The concept of Service-Learning was originally developed in the USA and is based on various didactic approaches, such as experiential learning (Lester et al., 2015), constructivist didactics (Arnold & Gomez Tutor, 2007; Müller-Naevecke & Naevecke, 2018) and, above all, Dewey's ideas on learning through civic responsibility and project-based teaching (Dewey, 1930; Seifert, 2011; Sliwka, 2004). The combination of "learning" and "community", i.e. learning in projects and service for the well-being of a community, has been firmly anchored in the USA since the 1980s in the approach of "civic education", education and training for civic engagement and democracy (Sliwka, 2004). The concept only came to Germany at the beginning of the 2000s, but has since only been used and further developed at a few universities (Hofer, 2019). This is where the Service-Learning sub-project at Saarland University comes in, in order to anchor Service-Learning as a concept in the European environment.

2.1 Definition

There are many different definitions of Service-Learning. What they all have in common is that Service-Learning consists of two components, a university course and a service provided by the students. In contrast to many well-known conventional seminar concepts, Service-Learning combines theory and practice. Furthermore, it includes charitable and social commitment on the part of the students. (e.g. Bringle, Hatcher & McIntosh, 2006; Felten & Clayton, 2011; Hofer, 2019; Reimer, Osann & Godat, 2020).

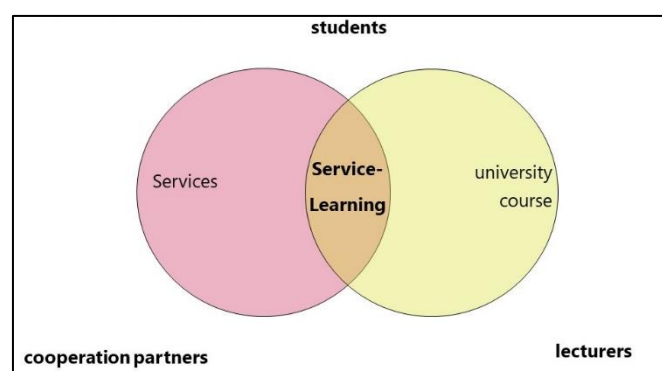


Image 1: Components of Service-Learning.

The **service component** includes the students' services at a cooperation partner. The **learning component** covers the university course and the guided reflection of the students. In Service-Learning, the **service** is provided by the students. It usually takes place in the students' local social environment. Students have the opportunity to gain practical experience related to the content of their studies and at the same time become socially involved (e.g. in social, cultural, political or ecological areas). The aim of the service for students is to solve a real problem and take responsibility for society (Felten & Clayton, 2011; Reinders, 2016). The **university course** usually takes place as part of a seminar at the university. It includes academic learning on the one hand and reflection on the experiences gained during Service-Learning on the other. In addition to the subject-specific learning of curricular content, the aim is also to develop social and methodological skills. Service-Learning courses also create a link between theory and practice through the combination of service and a university course (Billig, 2000; Reinders, 2016). In order to support this and carry out Service-Learning effectively, both components should be balanced.

Service-Learning **stakeholders** come from three different groups: the students, the teachers and the cooperation partners. Service-Learning offers **students** the opportunity to learn by working on a specific practical problem. In doing so, they not only acquire the technical skills required in their subject curriculum, but also personal, social and professional skills. Research findings show that Service-Learning contributes significantly to students' personal development. For example, they develop a better self-concept, greater self-efficacy (Yorio & Yee, 2012) and more tolerance (e.g. Eyler, 2011). The development of social skills has also been shown in empirical studies on Service-Learning (Eyler, 2011). For example, students who have participated in Service-Learning courses feel a stronger sense of belonging to society and take on more social and political responsibility (Gray et al., 1998; Eyler & Gilles, 1999). Service-Learning also often represents a starting point for social engagement later in students' lives (Eyler, 2011). With regard to the academic and intellectual development of students in Service-Learning, it has been shown that students' reflective judgment and problem-solving skills increase through Service-Learning (Eyler, 2011; Hofer, 2019) and that Service-Learning has a positive influence on students' motivation to learn (Chapdelaine & Chapman, 1999). This is also reflected in the higher learning success experienced and actually achieved by students (Eyler, 2011; Hofer, 2019; Reinders, 2016). **Teachers** are primarily responsible for organizing the Service-Learning course. They conduct the joint course sessions, impart theoretical content, coordinate the arrangements with the cooperation partners and accompany the students during their services by providing guidance for reflection. Service-learning also gives them insights into practice and the opportunity to get to know cooperation partners and to enter into sustainable partnerships and secure them for future courses (Eyler, 2011; Reimer et al., 2020). Cooperation partners in Service-Learning offer students the opportunity to carry out their service with them. At the same time, the

cooperation partners also benefit from the service provided by the students: They receive concrete support and additional resources as well as sometimes new input from the students and, in the best case, sustainable partnerships with the university (Bartsch & Grottker, 2021; Hagemus-Becker & Altenschmidt, 2019). Possible cooperation partners for Service-Learning can be non-profit organizations (e.g. Caritas, Diaconia), associations (e.g. music or sports clubs), schools, kindergardens, childcare facilities, companies, cities.

The following examples of Service-Learning offers illustrate the definition presented. In a Service-Learning offer, students of psychology acquire content-related skills in the field of mental health and apply them by taking on a counselling service in a non-profit organization. Another example from the Department of Computer Science is a Service-Learning offers on the topic of digital education. Here, students acquire content-related skills in computer science and organize workshops for primary school pupils at schools in the region surrounding the university.

2.2 Quality criteria for implementation

Just as there are a variety of definitions, there are also different sets of criteria that are relevant for the implementation and quality of Service-Learning. In German-speaking countries, the reference framework of the German university network Bildung durch Verantwortung e.V. (Sonnberger & Leitzmann, 2020) is particularly widespread. This was used as the basis for the realization of the various project goals as part of the Service-Learning sub-project at Saarland University. As it can also be considered the theoretical basis for the recommendations in Chapter 3, it will be briefly explained here.

The aforementioned reference framework was developed in a participatory exchange process. The ten quality criteria included are based on a synopsis of existing quality criteria for Service-Learning (Sonnberger & Leitzmann, 2020). Corresponding definitions were developed for each criterion. The result is shown in the table below.

Table 1: Reference framework for the quality of Service-Learning (Sonnberger & Leitzmann, 2020).

Societal need	"Projects and measures arise from real social problems and tasks and are aimed at a concrete benefit for the individual, a group or society."
Defined goals	"All those involved define common goals, which are worked towards cooperatively and that are checked for achievement at the end."
Part of the study program	"Service-Learning is integrated into the structure and content of the degree program and linked to the learning goals of the degree program."

Acquisition of skills of the students	"Students acquire personal, social, technical and professional skills in Service-Learning, depending on the content and didactic design by the teachers and the non-profit organizations."
Learning in foreign living environments	"Students learn and act outside their own university and study environment."
Cooperation of the participants	"All participants work together on the planning, preparation and design of Service-Learning."
Reflection	"The participants reflect on their experiences in Service-Learning with professional and academic guidance."
Guidance for the students	"Students are supported and accompanied in the planning and implementation of Service-Learning projects."
Evaluation and quality development	"Service-Learning projects include measures for evaluation, in particular for quality assurance and development."
Recognition and appreciation	"The commitment and achievements of those involved in Service-Learning are recognized and appreciated, especially at the end."

2.3 Procedure and planning of a Service-Learning course

Basic recommendations can also be made for the prototypical process and planning of a Service-Learning course. The process and planning were developed as part of the Service-Learning sub-project and are outlined below.

In principle, Service-Learning courses, like many other course formats, can be divided into three phases: preparation, implementation and follow-up. However, the implementation of Service-Learning differs from many other courses. In addition to a joint kick-off session at the beginning and a joint closing meeting at the end of the course, it also includes the course and service phases, which can be individually organized in different ways (see Fig. 2).

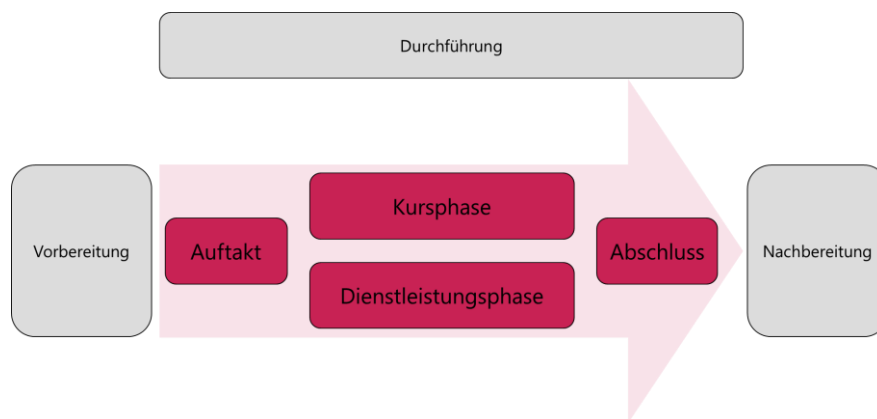


Abbildung 2: Ablauf einer Service-Learning Veranstaltung.

The **preparation** primarily concerns the teachers. It starts with the idea of possible student services that can be anchored in the curriculum. Initial contact is made with cooperation partners. In the initial meetings, mutual expectations and goals are discussed and the roles of all groups of people involved in Service-Learning are clarified in order to create the basis for cooperation. The framework conditions for the course are also defined (Reimer et al., 2020).

The **implementation** includes the joint course events and the implementation of the student services. All groups of people involved meet at the **kick-off session**. This is where the seminar concept is presented, the timetable for the course is determined and the framework conditions for the students are presented. In addition, the first contact between the students and their cooperation partners takes place so that common goals for the service can be agreed upon (Bartsch & Grottker, 2021; Reimer et al., 2020).

Important components of the **course phase** are the theoretical foundations which are important for the students' service and the reflection of the experiences which the students can gain during the service. It is the teachers' task to present the technical content, provide organizational support, prepare the students methodically for their service, guide the students' reflection and accompany the entire process. The timing of the course phase can be individually adapted. Both regular weekly sessions at the same time as the students' service and individual guidance of the students, e.g. through reflection tasks on the service, without a face-to-face meeting in the large group are possible (Hagemus-Becker & Altenschmidt, 2019; Reimer et al., 2020).

The **service phase** runs at the same time as the course phase. The service phase can begin with the course phase, or it can start at a different time. If, for example, theoretical foundations are a requirement for the service, the service phase should only begin after the course phase - if, on the other hand, knowledge about the circumstances of the service is required to understand the content, the service phase should start before the course phase (Hagemus-Becker & Altenschmidt, 2019;

Hofer, 2019). During the service phase, students provide their service(s) independently, either individually or in small groups, in coordination with the respective cooperation partner. The services provided by the students can take place regularly on fixed days/on a fixed day of the week or as a block, several days in a row. This depends on the organization of the students in cooperation with the partners and the type of service (Hagemus-Becker & Altenschmidt, 2019).

In the joint **final meeting**, the students present their results and experiences to the course, the teacher and the respective cooperation partner. In a final reflection, the students reflect on their Service-Learning course. In addition, the entire course should be evaluated from the perspective of all participants (Bartsch & Grottker, 2021; Reimer et al., 2020; Hagemus-Becker & Altenschmidt, 2019).

Teachers use the **follow-up** to assess the students' examination performance on the one hand and to evaluate the evaluation in order to further develop the course on the other (Reimer et al., 2020).

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To find out more about the procedure of planning a Service-Learning course, the workshop for lecturers developed as part of the Transform4Europe sub-project can be used, which is a valuable addition to the recommendations for action presented here.

3 Recommendations for the implementation of Service-Learning

3.1 Recommendations for **teachers**

Teachers play a key role in Service-Learning. They initiate the courses and often go to great effort to implement Service-Learning.

This section summarizes measures to support teachers in the planning and implementation of their Service-Learning courses.

A first step in starting a Service-Learning course is to develop a (personal) **understanding of Service-Learning**. To do this, teachers should first familiarize themselves with the basics and principles of Service-Learning. The aim should be to understand how Service-Learning can be used and what learning objectives are being pursued for the participants. In order to achieve this goal, it is advisable to train teachers. A corresponding workshop was developed as part of the T4E Service-Learning sub-

project at Saarland University and is available to teachers at the partner universities in the T4E Alliance for further training.

In this context, it can also be helpful **to raise awareness of the benefits of Service-Learning** for everyone involved. Teachers can become aware of the benefits, for example, by developing convincing arguments and examples for their own university. Specialist literature, case studies or experience reports can also be used to illustrate the effectiveness and added value of Service-Learning. Teachers can obtain guidance for this in the above-mentioned workshop or through the explanations in these recommendations for action and the literature cited in them.

A subsequent important step is to gain **institutional support**. Teachers should share the benefits and potential of Service-Learning with key decision-makers at their university to gain important support. Effective tools can be your own proposals for integrating Service-Learning into the curriculum and for resources to support the implementation of the project. In addition to institutional support, **financial support** can also be important for the realization of Service-Learning. Teachers can look for financial resources themselves, apply for scholarships, grants or other funding opportunities to enable the implementation of Service-Learning.

Service-learning courses can also support interdisciplinary collaboration at a university by implementing Service-Learning in different departments and degree programs. Teachers can initiate joint projects or courses between different disciplines to facilitate collaboration and interdisciplinary exchange.

As soon as Service-Learning is anchored as a concept at your own university, **partnerships** need to **be established**. Teachers should build partnerships with non-profit organizations from the university's local environment. Existing networks should be used for this purpose. In doing so, they should adapt to the **local needs and real requirements** of the cooperation partners. They can develop projects that have a direct benefit for the community and address local challenges. They should also ensure that Service-Learning is accessible and relevant to a diverse student body in terms of **inclusion and diversity**. In this way, educators can ensure that different perspectives, experiences and needs of students and the community are considered in Service-Learning.

Once suitable cooperation partners have been found, you can **develop your own Service-Learning courses**. Teachers should first make sure that the planned courses can be integrated into existing curricula. In addition, clear learning goals should be defined that combine specialist content and suitable services, tasks or activities at the cooperation partners.

At the start of the Service-Learning course, the focus should initially be on **orientation and preparation** of the students. Teachers present students with all the important information about the course, the learning and project goals and the collaboration with the cooperation partners. The

students' expectations of the course and the expectations placed on the students during the course should also be discussed at the beginning.

During the course, it is the task of the lecturers **to support and accompany the students**. This includes regular meetings (with the entire group of students or individually) as well as being available to answer students' questions and problems. The focus of this support should be on student reflection, solving potential problems and the personal development of students. In addition, teachers should always remain **flexible and adaptable** during the Service-Learning course. If necessary, they should adapt their course to the needs of the students and cooperation partners. Teachers should also ensure that there is **a balance between theory and practice** in the Service-Learning course. The ratio of theoretical content and its practical application should be balanced so that students can apply their newly acquired theoretical knowledge almost completely in a real-life situation. Teachers should also encourage **students' self-reflection and personal development**. They should focus on social, personal and professional skills in addition to subject-specific skills. In order to support student **reflection**, teachers should create regular opportunities for students to reflect on their experiences and record their learning outcomes. Besides joint meetings and the use of reflection methods in the group, learning diaries or regular reflection questions, which are gradually made available to the students, are also suitable for this purpose. This allows students to better process their experiences, draw conclusions and deepen their learning. In times of digitalization, it also makes sense for teachers to use **technology and online platforms** to support communication, coordination and reflection in Service-Learning. For example, you can also use online tools to facilitate the exchange of information and resources and also offer virtual reflection opportunities.

Another important aspect is **teamwork**. Teachers can develop the team concept in Service-Learning and encourage students to work together as a team. They can do this, for example, through group projects or cooperative learning activities. **Transparency and communication** are also very important for the seminar process. Teachers should communicate clearly from the outset what is expected of students and how the Service-Learning project will work. They can provide clear guidelines, timelines and communication channels to avoid misunderstandings and ensure smooth collaboration. Service-Learning can also be used to encourage student responsibility by giving them more autonomy and freedom of choice. Students can be encouraged to set their own goals, plan their service and take responsibility for their own learning and engagement.

In addition to these aspects, the **evaluation** of Service-Learning courses is also important in order to assess the learning success and quality of the course. Feedback from students and cooperation partners should also be taken into account alongside evaluations of the learning and service components. The evaluation results can be used to make adjustments and continuously improve the

Service-Learning programs. It is also important for students to be adequately **recognized** for their commitment and appropriately **assessed** in the study context. As well as grades and credit points in the traditional sense, certificates and their ceremonial presentation are suitable formats here.

A completed Service-Learning course is followed by **exchange and further training** for teachers. Teachers should continuously develop their knowledge and skills in the field of Service-Learning. To this end, they can take part in training courses, workshops or conferences that deal with Service-Learning in order to learn about new methods and best practice examples. As part of the T4E Service-Learning sub-project at Saarland University, advanced workshops on the topic of Service-Learning have already been held at conferences, for example. Teachers are given the opportunity to exchange experiences and challenges in Service-Learning and to learn from each other. Building on this, the **further development of one's own Service-Learning practice** is also a recommendation. To do so, teachers can gather feedback from students, partner organizations and their colleagues and use this as a basis for future adjustments to their Service-Learning course or for new innovative ideas. Furthermore, teachers should **disseminate their experiences, results and findings from Service-Learning courses**, e.g. by presenting them in articles or conference papers, offering their own workshops or making the concept known in their institutions and among other teachers and convincing them of the importance of Service-Learning. In this context, further **documentation and research** into Service-Learning are also important for the further establishment of the concept. Teachers should document Service-Learning projects in order to record experiences, learning outcomes and best practices. They can conduct research activities to investigate the impact of Service-Learning on students, the community and the university. The results of the documentation and research can be used to improve the Service-Learning programs and serve as a basis for further publications in order to make Service-Learning even better known. In addition, partnerships that have been established should be **secured and anchored** in the long term. Strategies should be developed here to establish Service-Learning in the curricula in the future, to offer it regularly and to ensure the continuous promotion of Service-Learning courses. To this end, exchange with other departments and institutions should be sought in order to establish Service-Learning as an integral part of the university culture. The same applies **to cooperation and student engagement in society** (community engagement). Teachers should continue to engage in dialogue with local communities and non-profit organizations. They can organize events, roundtable discussions or information sessions to inform the community about Service-Learning activities and receive feedback. By actively engaging the community, educators can ensure that Service-Learning projects meet the real needs of the community and have a lasting impact. **Alumni can also be involved** to ensure the long-term sustainability of such Service-Learning practice. Teachers can include former students who have had Service-Learning experiences as alumni mentors or invite them to share their experiences with

current students and support them in Service-Learning. Teachers can also support Service-Learning by making the concept visible and known to the **public**. For example, they ought to publish their successes in press releases, report on the activities in social media or organize events to increase the **visibility** of Service-Learning in public.

The recommendations listed here can be a useful support and help for teachers to implement Service-Learning at their university in a profitable and sustainable way, thus effectively integrating community engagement into teaching and enriching the learning process for students.

3.2 Recommendations for **students**

Students also have an influence on the success or failure of Service-Learning that should not be underestimated. A great deal depends on students understanding Service-Learning as an opportunity and taking advantage of it, i.e. actively and committedly participating in their Service-Learning course and getting involved with the cooperation partners accordingly. Recommendations on how students can contribute to the success of Service-Learning are provided below.

First of all, students can **inform** themselves about Service-Learning. They should familiarize themselves with the concept and understand how it is implemented at their university. If Service-Learning is included in their own curriculum or if it is possible to take a Service-Learning course as part of their studies, students can take this course if they are interested. They should make sure that they are motivated and interested in the course, its content and the cooperation.

At the beginning of a Service-Learning course, students should understand the **needs and goals** of the course. They can help to identify and define these by exchanging ideas with the cooperation partners and understanding their perspectives. If a **cooperation partner** has already been found, they should **become familiar** with them. You should get to know the cooperation partner, their mission and their goals. An initial meeting with representatives of the cooperation partner or a visit to the relevant institution can also help. Students should also **be open to new perspectives**, to broadening their horizons and to learning from previously unfamiliar environments and the experiences and opinions of others, as they will be working with people from different backgrounds and cultures in Service-Learning.

Students can also actively participate in the **planning and implementation** of the Service-Learning project. They can share their ideas and experience, take on tasks and contribute to the development and implementation of solutions. Above all, however, students should be actively involved in the **reflection process**. They should reflect on their experiences, findings and learning outcomes and gain new perspectives and insights. This supports their personal learning process and the development of professional and interdisciplinary skills. For example, they can repeatedly ask

themselves during the course of the project what they can learn or have already learned, how they have developed personally and how they have already been able to improve their skills and knowledge. Above all, they should **document their experiences**, i.e. ideally in writing and record them with insights in the form of photos, videos or other media. But students should also constantly **reflect on themselves**. In Service-Learning, they are constantly given opportunities for self-reflection. They should use these opportunities to think about their own values, attitudes and prejudices. They can ask themselves what impact Service-Learning has on them personally and how it changes their perspective on social issues and societal challenges.

Students also make a significant contribution to the success of the collaboration. They should work as a team with their fellow students and also work cooperatively with the cooperation partners. Through good **cooperation and teamwork**, they can learn from each other, contribute their strengths and work together to find effective solutions. They should show respect and tolerance in their dealings with each other and be open to new ideas and perspectives from others. Students should **engage** in Service-Learning and **take responsibility** for their service. They should always complete their tasks conscientiously, meet agreed deadlines and time limits and demonstrate a reliable work ethic. For students, a Service-Learning course also **involves communication and relationship building**: Students should maintain open and respectful communication with partner organizations, instructors and others involved. By building strong relationships, they can foster trusting collaboration and a lasting impact on the community. They should approach the people they meet in Service-Learning with an open attitude. This includes respecting cultural differences and being sensitive to the diversity of the people they work with. In this way, students also develop **empathy and intercultural competence** during Service-Learning. At the end of their Service-Learning course, students should give constructive **feedback** on their experiences. They can share their experiences and suggestions for improvement with teachers, partner organizations and the university in order to continuously enhance the quality of the Service-Learning course.

By actively and responsibly participating in Service-Learning courses, students help ensure that the projects have real benefits for the community while enriching their own learning.

3.3 Recommendations for universities

Universities themselves are also of great importance for the successful implementation of Service-Learning. Only they can create the framework conditions for Service-Learning to achieve successful and sustainable effects in the university environment and at the university itself.

First, universities can make a clear **institutional commitment** to Service-Learning. This can be done, for example, by integrating Service-Learning into the university strategy, setting guidelines and providing missing resources. Universities can also **create incentives** to encourage the staff and

students to participate in Service-Learning. This can be done through financial support, awards, scholarships or opportunities to develop their own skills.

Building on this, it is recommended that a **Service-Learning coordination office** be set up at the university. This can support lecturers in the organization and effective implementation of Service-Learning and thus take a large burden of additional tasks off their shoulders. In addition, such a coordination office also serves as a point of contact for all others involved in Service-Learning. Students and (potential) cooperation partners can also get in touch here with inquiries or problems. Furthermore, such an office could also offer training courses or workshops for those involved in Service-Learning or the coordination office could take the lead in monitoring the quality and evaluation of Service-Learning courses. Universities can also provide other **necessary resources** for Service-Learning. These include financial resources for the implementation of Service-Learning, technical equipment, transportation and administrative support.

A very important aspect that makes Service-Learning possible in the first place is the **integration** of this concept **into the curricula**. Universities should integrate Service-Learning into various degree programs and develop corresponding courses so that they have a permanent place in the curricula. At this point, it is also advisable **to involve students** in the process. Student representation on selected committees or feedback from students can ensure a regular dialog and help to actively involve students in decision-making processes and take their ideas and perspectives into account in the development and implementation of Service-Learning.

Universities should create opportunities for students to have their Service-Learning **assessed and recognized**. The awarding of CP as part of the degree course should be anchored, but other opportunities for recognition in the form of certificates or awards should also be established in order to recognize the additional commitment of students.

Universities can also contribute to **quality assurance and development**. Service-Learning courses should be evaluated, learning outcomes reviewed and feedback obtained from all those involved (students, lecturers and cooperation partners). Only in this way can Service-Learning be continuously developed and dynamically adapted to the needs of all those involved.

Furthermore, Universities should develop and offer **further education and training programs** for teachers to provide them with the basics of the concept and helpful tips for implementation. In this context, other topics such as pedagogical approaches, various reflection methods, partnership development and relationship work or student engagement can also be covered in training courses or workshops.

Service-Learning **partnerships** can also be promoted by the universities. Universities can form networks and thus establish long-term partnerships. These can be strengthened through regular

meetings, joint projects, the exchange of resources or expertise on the part of the universities.

Exchange and further networking should also be encouraged. For example, platforms can be created or meetings organized to exchange experiences or share best practices for cooperation between the various stakeholders.

Research in the field of Service-Learning should also be further supported by the universities. In addition to evaluation studies on Service-Learning, other studies on Service-Learning practices or the effects of Service-Learning are also conceivable, which can contribute to the development of Service-Learning and evidence-based practice in teaching through publications. Service-Learning results should also be made **public** in order to communicate their importance for society. For example, experience reports from students and cooperation partners can be published in the press or on websites.

3.4 Recommendations for **cooperation partners**

Of course, cooperation partners also contribute to a Service-Learning course. They, too, take responsibility for the students and the success of the course.

At the beginning of Service-Learning, the cooperation partners should define **clear expectations and goals** together with the university or the teaching staff. Here, the role and tasks of the students at the cooperation partner should be defined and expectations of the results and the type and manner of cooperation should also be determined. The cooperation **partners provide the opportunities for the students' services**. Cooperation partners should ensure that the services are relevant and appealing to the students and that the Service-Learning projects address real needs while offering learning opportunities for the students. **Flexibility and adaptability** are also important for cooperation partners in Service-Learning. Cooperation partners should be open to change and adaptation of student services, only then can they meet the learning goals of the students and the needs of the community. It is also important for successful collaboration in Service-Learning to be flexible in responding to new challenges and circumstances. Furthermore, the cooperation partners should respect and value **the cultural diversity of the students** as well as their different backgrounds and perspectives. It is important to create an inclusive environment that promotes the engagement of all students. In addition, collaborative partners can **also provide resources and materials** needed to implement Service-Learning. Besides material resources, this can also include access to specialist knowledge or support in obtaining the necessary data (e.g. for research projects).

During Service-Learning, **supervision and support for students** should be ensured at the cooperation partners, e.g. through a personal contact person and their guidance, the provision of clear task descriptions and the necessary resources for the implementation of the service as well as

regular feedback. Cooperation partners should also **enable students to reflect**. Cooperation partners can support the reflection processes by actively integrating reflection activities into the course of the project, providing students with opportunities for exchange and discussion in the partner organizations and promoting critical self-reflection among students. All participants can benefit from the exchange of experiences, perspectives and insights. The cooperation partners additionally have a real influence on the commitment of the students. By involving students in the work of their organizations, they give them this opportunity and contribute to strengthening student engagement.

Open and transparent communication between the cooperation partners and the university or teaching staff is also crucial. Regular exchange, clear agreements and the sharing of possible difficulties contribute to successful cooperation. In addition, the cooperation partners can also contribute to the **evaluation and further development** of Service-Learning by providing feedback on the cooperation and the results achieved. Based on this feedback, the collaboration can be optimized for future projects if necessary. To ensure the **sustainability** of Service-Learning, cooperation partners can commit to long-term partnerships that go beyond individual Service-Learning courses. Only through long-term partnerships and continuous cooperation can long-term effects become visible. In this context, the cooperation partners can also participate in networks and information or further training offers. The exchange with other partners and participation in such initiatives enables the formation of new networks, further development and also the exchange of knowledge in the field of Service-Learning.

Another point concerns **documentation and reporting**. The cooperation partners can also make a contribution here. They can help to prepare reports, facilitate studies or publications to make the successes and challenges of Service-Learning visible.

4 Concluding remarks

Service-Learning offers a unique opportunity to combine higher education with social engagement and practical application. By integrating Service-Learning into the curriculum, students can apply their knowledge and skills in real-world contexts, supporting the community while enhancing their personal and professional growth. In this guide, we have presented a variety of recommendations and best practices for teachers, students, collaborative partners and universities to realize the potential of Service-Learning. Of course, the recommendations collected here are not intended to be definitive. Service-Learning is a dynamic seminar concept that can be flexibly adapted to different needs and conditions. Rather, the recommendations for action listed here are to be understood as a basis and orientation aid for profitable Service-Learning. The recommendations can therefore also be flexibly adapted to specific contexts.

Service-Learning opens up a wide range of opportunities for lecturers, students, universities and cooperation partners to work together to bring about positive change. It promotes engaged learning, reflection, the development of key competencies and the building of sustainable partnerships. However, the successful use of Service-Learning requires careful planning, clear communication, appropriate support and continuous evaluation. By following and applying the recommendations and best practices in these recommendations for action, all stakeholders can establish Service-Learning as an enriching and effective teaching-learning format and thus contribute to the positive transformation of society and education - in the sense of the Transform4Europe Alliance in Europe.

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