



TEFCE

Towards a European Framework for
Community Engagement in Higher Education

ASSESSING THE FEASIBILITY OF DEVELOPING A FRAMEWORK FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION

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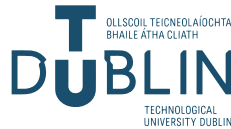
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Dedication: The authors would like to dedicate this report to the memory of Paul Benneworth, whose intellectual leadership and academic work was central to the the TEFCE project and who will be sadly missed by all of us.

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Introduction

The role of higher education in responding to societal challenges is re-emerging as a policy priority in many countries (Benneworth et al., 2018, Farnell, 2020). This priority is featured in the EU's *Renewed Agenda for Higher Education* and in the Horizon 2020 programme. It is also reflected in the expectation that universities¹ should contribute to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Community engagement in higher education is central to this debate and is thus an increasingly relevant topic for policymakers, universities and their communities. Community engagement is about how universities address societal needs in partnership with their external communities. More precisely, the TEFCE project proposes the following definitions of 'engagement', 'community' and 'societal needs'.

- **Community:** refers to 'communities of place, identity or interest', thus including organisations from government, business, civil society organisations and citizens, from the local to the global level.
- **Engagement:** refers to a process whereby universities undertake joint activities with external communities in a way that is mutually beneficial, even if each side benefits in a different way.
- **Societal needs:** refer to political, economic, cultural, social, technological and environmental factors that can influence the quality of life in society.

This publication examines how community engagement in higher education could become a **central part of the higher education policy landscape in Europe in the next decade** and proposes various policy options and policy recommendations.

The starting point to the discussion is the framework that was developed within the TEFCE project: the TEFCE Toolbox for Community Engagement in Higher Education (Farnell et al., 2020). The TEFCE Toolbox is a reference tool for universities, communities and policymakers to better understand the dimensions of community engagement and a practical tool for universities to determine how well they perform and where they can improve. In the first section of this publication, the authors will provide arguments as to why the TEFCE Toolbox can be considered a robust tool based on the results of its piloting. In the second section, a more critical approach will be taken by analysing how the TEFCE Toolbox approach compares to other types of tools used to assess the performance of universities in various areas, and whether the TEFCE Toolbox is well suited to meet its objectives of holistic community engagement assessment. In the third and fourth chapters, the discussion will focus on what preconditions need to be in place for community engagement to flourish in European higher education – looking both at 'top-down' policy approaches and 'bottom-up' approaches to supporting community engagement. The final section will consider whether the TEFCE Toolbox could, in the longer term, become the basis for developing a new, interactive, transnational tool to provide insight into how different universities around Europe engage with their communities, without becoming a tool for competitive comparison.

¹ The TEFCE project uses the term 'university' to refer to all forms of tertiary education institutions, including research-intensive universities and universities of applied science.

1. TEFCE Toolbox: Upscaling potential at the transnational level

The TEFCE publication by Farnell (2020.b) provides an analysis of how the TEFCE Toolbox was developed and what were the results of its piloting. Based on the report, there are four arguments to support the TEFCE Toolbox as a tool that has the potential to be upscaled to the transnational level.

1.1. Involvement of experts and users in TEFCE Toolbox creation

The TEFCE Toolbox is the result of a co-creation process involving over 170 participants from eight countries over 18 months. The Toolbox prototype and method was developed by five international experts (T. Farnell, P. Benneworth, B. Ćulum Ilić, M. Seeber, N. Šćukanec Schmidt), based on their study *Mapping and Critical Synthesis on the State-of-the-Art in Community Engagement in Higher Education* (Benneworth et al., 2018). The development of the TEFCE Toolbox is based on an in-depth review of over 200 articles and books on community engagement in higher education and analysis of nine already existing tools to assess community engagement in higher education. The final version of the TEFCE Toolbox is the result of collecting practices from over 120 practitioners and discussions among 50 experts and representatives of universities and their communities during piloting visits at four universities with diverse institutional profiles (University of Rijeka, Croatia, University of Twente, the Netherlands, Technische Universität Dresden, Germany, and Technological University Dublin, Ireland).

1.2. TEFCE Toolbox application in diverse institutional settings

The application of the TEFCE Toolbox was successful at four universities that were diverse in terms of:

- their institutional profiles (technological and comprehensive universities);
- their institutional missions and priorities (from a primary focus on technology-driven innovation to a broader focus on diverse societal needs);
- their size and level of integration (student populations from 9,000 to 36,000 and campus-based integrated universities to universities with dislocated and autonomous faculties/departments)
- their geography (from capital cities to small towns);
- their socioeconomic and cultural contexts (from countries with relatively high and relatively low levels of GDP per capita; from western to south-eastern Europe).

This means that the TEFCE Toolbox allowed for context-specific application in different institutional contexts.

1.3. TEFCE Toolbox evaluation by piloting institutions

The evaluation of the TEFCE Toolbox was positive in all four piloting universities, even though the outcomes of the Toolbox application were different at each institution. Three aspects were emphasised as being particularly successful.

Firstly, a range of community engagement activities can be captured using the TEFCE Toolbox and the application can be adapted to each local context. For example, at certain piloting universities much of the engagement focused on topics such as smart cities and support to regional innovation, whereas at other universities there were more examples of engagement with socially disadvantaged communities.

Secondly, the TEFCE Toolbox application encouraged a participative approach that was meaningful for the participants involved – including staff, students and community representatives. Participants could have a meaningful say in the process and influence the conclusions of the assessment. Such an approach in turn encouraged consensus-building among various stakeholders, moving towards a common vision.

Thirdly, the TEFCE Toolbox approach resulted in an institutional learning journey, providing users with new data on what achievements and good practices the university already has in place in the area of community engagement. This provided a much-needed acknowledgement of the efforts of community-engaged staff, students and partners, while also providing an evidence basis for further improving community engagement in the institution. The process also resulted in mobilising an internal network of community-engaged practitioners and stakeholders, who can continue pushing further efforts within the institution.

1.4. Feedback to TEFCE Toolbox by international stakeholders

The TEFCE Toolbox was positively received by a broad range of stakeholders at the international level, including international organisations, networks, experts and university representatives. In 2019 and 2020, the TEFCE Toolbox was presented via meetings, conferences and webinars to over 1,000 people. The conclusions of all consultations (published here: www.tefce.eu/consultations) indicated that there is broad acceptance that community engagement should be included among the priorities of higher education policy; there is broad support for the TEFCE Toolbox, in particular the critical, qualitative and developmental approach; and there is an interest on behalf of many universities worldwide to apply the Toolbox.

The conclusion of the TEFCE Expert Team is that the TEFCE Toolbox has the potential to become a robust tool that will support European universities (and potentially universities worldwide) in institutionalising their cooperation with the wider community. In the next section, we will examine this claim more critically by considering what other types of tools and ‘policy levers’ exist in the field of higher education and discussing whether TEFCE addresses a broad and effective mix of policy levers to achieve the objective of supporting community engagement in higher education.

2. Policy levers for community engagement – analysis of options

2.1 Assessing the suitability of policy tools to support community engagement

Due to the wide range of activities covered by community engagement (e.g. teaching, research, management, outreach) and diverse stakeholders, community engagement is difficult to manage and measure (Benneworth et al., 2018). But the TEFCE project consortium believes that this difficulty can be avoided by encouraging a formative assessment that recognises good practices and highlights areas of potential improvement in the local context. Hence, the consortium avoids developing tools that support a competitive comparison of standardized performance. Ideally, the formative assessment is repeated over time to measure progress against institutions' own criteria. The new TEFCE framework aims to *'foster a learning journey for universities towards transformational forms of engagement, rather than being a measurement and ranking exercise'* (Benneworth et al., 2018).

This section reviews the suitability of various tools for steering, assessing and/or rewarding performance in higher education by applying four principles that the TEFCE consortium defined as essential for the topic of assessing and supporting community engagement in higher education. The principles are based on a critical analysis by Benneworth et al. (2018) of the challenges of assessing community engagement in higher education, and are the following:

- 1. Authenticity of engagement:** the tool should recognise community engagement that provides the community with a meaningful role and tangible benefits rather than 'pseudo-engagement'.
- 2. Empowerment of individuals:** the tool should recognise different kinds of community engagement efforts and should result in a process that empowers individuals.
- 3. Bottom-up rather than top-down steering:** the tool should be participative and should be based on the experiences and stories of practitioners rather than the best practices cherry-picked by the management team.
- 4. Learning journey rather than benchmarking:** the tool should result in qualitative discovery of good practices, a critical reflection on strengths and areas of improvements achieved through a collaborative learning process.

In total, nine policy tools are assessed applying the community engagement principles listed above. An overview of the tools and a brief description are provided in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Overview of tools for steering, assessing and/or rewarding performance in higher education

TOOLS	DESCRIPTION
1. Funding agreements	Contract-like policy instrument in which a (governmental) authority awards funding to an institution in exchange for promised and/or proven performances, often expressed in performance indicators.
2. External quality assurance with accreditation	Assessment of an institution's quality through an external agent (see Tool 3, below), leading to a decision by authorities to recognise the institution as a legitimate university, granting e.g. the right to teach, to award degrees, to be funded by the government. Accreditation decisions should be based on previously published criteria.
3. External quality assurance without accreditation	Assessment of an institution's quality (of education, and/or research, and/or institutional arrangements, such as its internal quality management) through an external agent. The external agent's judgment and report may or may not be published. The report may contain suggestions or recommendations for quality enhancement. As a rule, the process of external quality assurance begins with an institutional self-assessment (see Tool 9, below) and follows up with an institutional review (see Tool 8, below).
4. Ranking	Assigning a position or score to an institution relative to others. As a rule, a 'league table' consists of overall, composite ranks of universities (globally or nationally) acting as a short-cut indication of their 'quality'.

5. Awards	Token of recognition of an institution's outstanding performance, granted publicly by an external agent. May be based on a ranking (see Tool 4, above) or benchmarking (see Tool 7, below, mostly in its first meaning), although awards may often combine both subjective and objective criteria (e.g. awards combining indicators with a committee decision).
6. Quality labels	Token of recognition of a certain (high) level of performance of an institution. Based on a rating rather than a ranking (see Tool 4, above), hence less exclusive than an award (see Tool 5, above) and more (unlike many awards) based on transparent criteria, which may include benchmarking (see Tool 7, below), institutional review (see Tool 8, below) or institutional submission of information (similar to a self-assessment, see Tool 9, below).
7. Benchmarking	'Benchmark' may be used in two meanings in this context: 1. A standard of best performance against which to measure an institution's performance, or 2. The process of measuring an institution's performance and learning from another institution how to improve. In the latter sense, if 'best performance' is not straightforward, mutual benchmarking (learning) may take place.
8. Institutional reviews	A process of assessing certain aspects of an institution's performance, e.g. its quality (see Tool 3, above) or its community engagement. As a rule, institutional review includes external experts' judgment, usually after a site visit, and may be based on information provided through a self-assessment (see Tool 9, below).
9. Self-assessment	An overall (collection of) evaluation(s) of processes and performances in an institution, performed by and/or on behalf of the institution itself, meant to reflect on the past results of those processes and performances with the intention to improve future processes and performances. Often, it builds upon regular monitoring or smaller evaluation exercises. Often, too, self-assessment is an indispensable information source for institutional reviews (see Tool 8, above) or external quality assurance (see Tools 2 and 3, above).

In Table 2 below the nine policy tools are assessed on a three-level, qualitative scale indicating to what extent each tool is applicable for supporting community engagement in higher education, according to the four principles defined by the TEFCE project. As indicated in the table, most existing policy tools would not be in line with the TEFCE principles.

Table 2: Level of applicability of tools to the TEFCE principles for supporting community engagement

Tools	TEFCE principles for supporting community engagement through tools				Average score
	Authenticity of engagement	Empowerment of individuals	Bottom-up rather than top-down steering	Learning journey rather than benchmarking	
1. Funding agreements	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low
2. External quality assurance with accreditation	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low
3. External quality assurance without accreditation	Low	Low	Low	Medium	Low-medium
4. Ranking	Low	Medium	Low	Low	Low-medium
5. Awards	Low	Medium	Medium	Low	Medium-low
6. Quality labels	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium-low
7. Benchmarking	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium-low
8. Institutional reviews	Medium	High	Medium	High	Medium-high
9. Self-assessment	Medium	High	High	High	High-medium

The conclusions of our analysis are the following;

- Authenticity of engagement:** Engaging community members in the evaluation process is desirable to create authentic feedback loops and evaluate the value added by various community engagement activities. It incorporates the voice of more vulnerable community groups and enables participants to actively steer the community engagement process. Most of the policy tools applied by 'powerful' external parties such as funding agreements, external quality assurance or benchmarking (Tools 1-7) would be poorly suited to collect input from community members directly unless specific provisions are made. Legitimacy of these tools is based on their scalability. Collecting and evaluating qualitative stakeholder feedback would be too time-consuming and expensive. Such an approach would remain an outlier rather than a common practice. Thus, a low score (principle not attained or to a very limited extent) was awarded to funding agreements, external quality assurance, ranking, awards, quality labels and benchmarking. However, community feedback could be more easily incorporated both in institutional reviews and self-assessment if appropriate provisions are taken.
- Empowerment of individuals:** This principle calls for policy tools that recognise the value of diverse community engagement initiatives in an inclusive and flexible manner. Large-scale standardised tools such as funding agreements and external quality assurance often fall short of providing such flexibility and customisation (low score – principle not attained or to a very limited extent). Rankings, awards, quality labels and benchmarking allow for some flexibility if set up to reflect a holistic performance of the institutions, facilitating customisation and change over time. Nonetheless, some level of standardisation is still expected when utilising these tools as they require comparability among universities (medium score – principle attained to some extent). On the contrary, institutional reviews and self-assessment, particularly when using the current TEFCE Toolbox, are likely to result in an inclusive evaluation of all activities across the institution, as demonstrated in the pilot projects. Hence the last two options receive the highest score (principle attained to a fairly large extent).
- Bottom-up rather than top-down steering:** High-stakes tools that have a direct impact on institutions' resources or reputation such as funding agreements, external quality assurance (especially if connected to accreditation) and rankings are often subject to top-down steering. These tools do not encourage critical reflection, but rather induce compliance and competitive behaviour among institutions. These high-stake tools are counterproductive for obtaining a holistic assessment from practitioners and hence receive the lowest score in the evaluation matrix (low score). Awards and quality labels are 'add-on' evaluation mechanisms that are less likely to influence institutions' resources or put institutions' reputation at stake. Usually, participation is on a voluntary basis and most participants anticipate a positive outcome. Therefore, these tools are less likely to be perceived as competition-oriented and putting institutions' reputation at stake, which increases the chance of response aimed at actual improvement of performance rather than image-saving strategies (medium score). Similarly, benchmarking and institutional reviews are often more insight-driven (especially if reports are shared among participating actors in the institution) rather than competitive, but might still have some impact on public image of institutions (if published), thus still running the risk of image-saving strategies becoming dominant over improvement-oriented action (medium score). Finally, self-assessment is more likely to be seen as a diagnostic tool and learning journey rather than a comparative and competitive assessment tool and therefore receives the maximum score on bottom-up steering (high score).
- Learning journey rather than benchmarking:** Policy tools such as funding agreements, accreditation, rankings and awards (Tools 1, 2, 4, 5) tend to reward past performance, but often yield limited insight into contextual variables of institutional performance – inhibiting a learning journey towards improved future performance. Quantitative and limited in scope, these tools highlight 'who' is the 'best' (or in the case of accreditation who achieves the standards)

but omit ‘why’ and ‘how’. Additionally, publicly available information on the methodology of rankings or rewards is habitually simplified and lacks full transparency. Similarly, the information about funding agreements are frequently available to the responsible units only (e.g. financial department and the top management). Thus, funding agreements, accreditation, rankings and rewards receive the lowest score. Moving along the spectrum, external quality assurance without accreditation, quality labels and benchmarking are more likely to be transparent in their criteria and may identify strengths and potential areas for improvement. Some quality labels² can provide opportunities for development through different attainment tiers, thus encouraging a learning journey (although they maintain a single model rather than allowing contextualised improvements). Although benchmarking tools are often quantitative, they provide more contextual variables than rankings do. Most modern benchmarking tools can be customised through interactive dashboards to reflect the needs of multiple stakeholders and various performance dimension. Thus, external quality assurance without accreditation, quality labels and benchmarking receive the middle score. Finally, institutional reviews and self-assessment tools tend to be exploratory and qualitative or semi-structured. By incorporating feedback from numerous stakeholders, they provide a holistic overview of different areas of community engagement. Such an approach allows stakeholders to learn from each other’s experience, strengths and areas of improvement. Therefore, the last two receive the highest score on this dimension.

The evaluation of community engagement tools applying the four principles defined by the TEFCE project team suggests that self-assessment is the most suited policy tool since it closely aligns with these principles. This conclusion, however, is subject to the proper execution of the self-assessment process, i.e. with genuine involvement of the institution’s staff members, and it would be even better if community members were involved as well. The next most suited tool is institutional reviews. On the upside, external experts leading institutional reviews can provide considerable support and expertise to institutions at the early stages of establishing community engagement practices and strategy, sharing insights about pilot visits conducted in other institutions. Additionally, experts may proactively encourage institutions to obtain feedback from community members as opposed to somewhat ‘closed’ self-evaluation processes. On the downside, as experts engage in the evaluation process, universities and community members are no longer the sole evaluators of their community engagement, which creates moderate risk of external views being imposed, occasionally without properly understanding the contextual variables. Moreover, evaluation from external experts on site might lead to increased attention from top management, which in turn may result in a more competitive approach (i.e. striving to show the university’s performance in the best possible light). The remaining eight policy tools received on average a score of no more than medium and a low score on at least one dimension and are therefore less likely to be ‘fit for purpose’ for the four principles at the current stage. However, moving forward, several policy tools, such as benchmarking, quality labels and awards could be revisited in later stages of community engagement development in Europe.

The TEFCE Toolbox does not fit entirely into any one of the nine tools analysed: it combines elements of both institutional reviews and self-assessment. The entire process begins with the institution examining its own practices and reaching a self-assessment based on given criteria. The ‘institutional review’ elements are then supported by various TEFCE expert teams providing expertise and facilitating the discovery process, as well as by involve diverse community groups in the process. However, institutions may prefer to implement the TEFCE Toolbox in a way that only involves ‘self-assessment’ elements, without the support of the expert team. Overall, the TEFCE Toolbox also provides a more flexible framework than would be traditionally associated with the terms ‘assessment’, ‘evaluation’ or ‘review’. The TEFCE Toolbox implementation allows for more exploratory and context-dependent approaches, and it is less rigid, indicator-driven and bureaucratic than most tools. It places more emphasis on participatory approaches, by both fostering discussions among management, staff and students at the university, and discussions with the community. For this reason, the TEFCE team decided to categorise the TEFCE Toolbox under a new type of tool that we refer to as **‘institutional self-reflection’**, that combines in a unique and flexible way elements of self-assessment and institutional reviews.

² Some accreditation schemes also provide different tiers with the explicit aim of stimulating a school’s journey to the highest-level kite mark, e.g. the EFMD foundation offers the option to move through EPAS/EFMD accredited business programmes to EQUIS accreditation for the whole business school, see <https://www.efmdglobal.org>.

The next section will consider what would be the feasibility of scaling the TEFCE Toolbox to a transnational level since the project aims to establish a community engagement policy tool at a European level.

2.2 Assessing the feasibility of upscaling the selected tools

The previous section compared various tools, considering how they align with the TEFCE principles. This section explores how the adopted approach of institutional self-reflection can be adequately implemented in the next phase. Beyond the four identified principles for policy tools to support community engagement, the feasibility of implementing the selected policy tools needs to be evaluated. In this section we specifically focus on evaluating the TEFCE Toolbox in a format of institutional self-reflection (including elements of self-assessment supported by institutional reviews), and the feasibility to scale this tool to a European level in the upcoming decade (2020-2030). The evaluation is split into two stages. The first stage focuses on establishing the TEFCE Toolbox at the European level, looking at the (1) visibility, (2) access and (3) capacity support for the TEFCE Toolbox. The second stage focuses on maintaining TEFCE's relevance over time by looking at (4) sustainability of the tool and (5) potential for customisation and integration with other tools. Several of these dimensions (visibility, accessibility, sustainability) have been addressed in a recent report by the European Entrepreneurship Education NETwork (Ruskovaara et al., 2016) evaluating seven tools for assessing entrepreneurship at universities.

2.2.1 Laying the foundations for Europe-wide application of the TEFCE Toolbox

The first stage is centred on setting up a conducive environment for applying the TEFCE Toolbox for evaluation community engagement at a European level. This stage is critical for the tool's later uptake. The TEFCE Toolbox should be sufficiently visible so various universities are aware of the tool and opportunities it provides for measuring and improving community engagement. Easy access and a user-friendly TEFCE Toolbox with sufficient instructions would then speed up its adoption, while capacity support from expert teams could facilitate institutions in overcoming initial roadblocks.

Visibility of the TEFCE Toolbox: Since the inception of the TEFCE project in 2018, the project has received considerable attention from various institutions in Europe and beyond. The TEFCE Toolbox has been developed and piloted throughout the TEFCE project but not yet released. Despite that, the TEFCE project and its Toolbox have achieved impressive international visibility through conferences, publications and consultations with stakeholders, as presented below:

- The TEFCE project was presented at two leading European conferences in the area of higher education policy: the 2019 European Quality Assurance Forum (Berlin, November 2019) and the 2020 European University Association Conference (April, 2020) and was also invited to present at a special event alongside existing tools in Europe such as those of the OECD/EC (HEInnovate) and the EC/JRC (Smart Specialisation Platform) at a EURASHE Roundtable 'Regional Engagement of Universities of Applied Sciences: Concept and Impact'.
- Meetings were held with leading networks in the field of community engagement in higher education, all of which expressed interest in the TEFCE Toolbox, including the Talloires Network, the Global University Network for Innovation, the Council of Europe, the International Association of Universities, the National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement (UK) and Campus Engage (Ireland).
- The TEFCE project paved the way for a special report to be commissioned by the European Commission's DG EAC (through the NESET network) entitled *Community engagement in higher education: trends, policies and practices*. The report features extensive references to the TEFCE project and the TEFCE Toolbox.
- The TEFCE project has also attracted wider attention and has been referenced in a number of relevant international publications, including: the OECD report *Benchmarking Higher Education System Performance* (2019); the report *The Place of Universities in Society* (Maassen et

al., 2019); the NESET (2020) study *Mapping and analysis of student-centred learning and teaching practices*; and the DAAD (2020) study *Internationalisation in Higher Education for Society (IHES): concept, current research and examples of good practice*. Chapters on the TEFCE project will also feature in the upcoming books *Re-envisioning Higher Education's Public Mission: Global Perspectives* (Papadimitriou & Boboc [Eds.]) and *Socially Responsible Higher Education* (Hall & Tandon [Eds.]).

Accessibility of the TEFCE Toolbox and data: The TEFCE Toolbox is planned to be publicly available to universities upon the end of the project (December 2020). The complete TEFCE Toolbox will be available in an open-access format with accompanying instructions on how to use it. The TEFCE team recommends that institutions interested to apply the TEFCE Toolbox reach out to the TEFCE expert team for further guidance and knowledge exchange. Such an approach would also ensure that the tool is used optimally. Institutions will have full ownership of the collected data and analysis and this information will not be shared with other institutions or publicly unless agreed upon. This approach allows institutions to discuss areas of development more freely both with the stakeholders and management. On the downside, it limits knowledge exchange across institutions and opportunities to learn from good practices realised elsewhere. If the TEFCE assessment is repeated, the progress made and insights from the 'learning journey' will only be available within the institution. Currently, the tool is available in English language only.

Capacity support for the TEFCE tool: Initial development and piloting of the TEFCE Toolbox were financed through the Erasmus+ KA3 project. The consortium has applied for a follow-up project that would allow to further support institutions in their community engagement efforts. It is not yet determined if additional support from the TEFCE expert team in the form of on-site visits will be available and whether it will be free of charge. Potential alternatives to increasing capacity support include online webinars by TEFCE experts either organised twice a year or upon request. Another alternative is to set up a network of TEFCE experts available for online consultations on a voluntary basis even after the end of the TEFCE project. Finally, good practices across all dimensions could be shared on an online platform to enable knowledge exchange. This alternative allows institutions to learn from each other while ensuring that institutions are still critically assessing their own efforts, as the TEFCE Toolbox does not promote 'cherry-picking' of best practices.

2.2.2 Sustaining the TEFCE Toolbox

After the initial set-up, the second stage aims to ensure that the use of TEFCE Toolbox is sustainable in the medium to long term. This means that institutions interested to use the TEFCE Toolbox have sufficient capacity and funding to carry out the project, which can take up to six months and requires coordination among multiple parties. Moreover, the TEFCE Toolbox must remain relevant for institutions, considering the current and anticipated future context. In the last years, the number of tools evaluating societal impact has increased. Universities can assess their impact on SDGs through reporting cards, submit those data for the Times Higher Education's Impact Ranking and further explore tools such as HEInnovate. Given this, the TEFCE project needs to find its unique proposition or a way to support the implementation of other tools through its holistic approach and diagnostic capabilities across higher education's functions.

Sustainability of the TEFCE tool: Sustainability dimension deals with funding and capacity required to perform the TEFCE Toolbox analysis at the institutions interested to carry out the analysis. Since the TEFCE Toolbox will be freely available online, the main costs entail personnel hours required to get acquainted with the TEFCE framework and perform the evaluation. The TEFCE Toolbox does not require specialised expertise, although it is advised to have a project owner with some background knowledge in community engagement. The project owner can be a community engagement officer if such a position is available at the institution, but it is not a requirement. The project owner will be responsible for leading and coordinating the project. In terms of capacity, involvement from academic staff, management and operational staff are expected to some degree and the assigned team will need to familiarise themselves with the TEFCE Toolbox. In the long run, institutions can use the TEFCE Toolbox for the initial assessment and then use the insights obtained to improve their community

engagement activities. The evaluation can be repeated within 3-5 years in order to assess their learning journey.

Customisation and integration of the TEFCE tool: TEFCE's value proposition could be strengthened by connecting the TEFCE Toolbox to the already existing and upcoming higher education policy priorities. Moreover, it could be linked to the existing tools such as HEInnovate or SDG reporting. Since 2015, when the UN's 2030 Agenda was announced, increasingly more universities are looking for ways to contribute to these goals. Community engagement is one of the areas where universities could expand their value proposition. Given that many institutions are looking to optimise their efforts in a higher education context where the number of available tools is growing, the TEFCE Toolbox should not compete, but supplement existing tools and reporting frameworks. At the same time, it should establish itself as a go-to tool for community engagement in the European higher education area.

* * *

In conclusion, this section has argued that the TEFCE Toolbox reflects the kind of policy tools that are most suitable to support community engagement in higher education. By combining elements of self-assessment and institutional reviews in innovative ways, the TEFCE Toolbox can be categorised as an **institutional self-reflection tool** that encourages a developmental process (a learning journey) for institutions rather than an formal evaluation, benchmarking or ranking exercise. The section has also argued that the TEFCE Toolbox could be upscaled and used throughout Europe (and beyond), although this would require ensuring conditions for the optimal use of the TEFCE Toolbox (through its accessibility and through ensuring support by experts in its application) and for its long-term sustainability.

3. Creating a top-down European policy framework for community engagement

Widespread, system-level embedding of community engagement in higher education requires a major change in European policy. Beyond a vision on community engagement, a change in the ‘framework conditions’ of higher education and research is needed (Farnell, 2020). While ambitious and unlikely in the short term, a gradual shift towards the societal responsibilities of universities is already taking place both at a top-down and bottom-up level. A top-down approach is needed to signal the importance of community engagement in Europe and stimulate synergies among programmes and tools that promote community engagement in the higher education sector. To carry out such a transformation, multiple policy levers can be utilised.

1.1 Mapping policy levers and tools

To understand how a top-down European policy framework for community engagement can be developed and implemented over the next decade, it is helpful to view the potential roadmap from a lens of five policy levers, identified by Schneider and Ingram (1990). These policy levers rely on underlying behavioural assumptions to attain policy goals and each lever makes a different assumption about how policy-relevant behaviour can be fostered.

- **Authority tools:** ‘statements backed by the legitimate authority of government that grant permissions, prohibit, or require action under designed circumstances.’
- **Incentive tools:** ‘rely on tangible payoffs, positive or negative, to induce compliance or encourage utilisation.’
- **Capacity tools:** ‘provide information, training, education, and resources to enable individuals, groups, or agencies to make decisions or carry out activities.’
- **Symbolic tools:** ‘seek to change perceptions about policy-preferred behaviour through appeals to intangible values... or through the use of images, symbols and labels.’
- **Learning tools:** ‘provide for wide discretion by lower-level agents or even the target groups themselves, who are able to experiment with different policy approaches.’

Farnell (2020) has proposed a framework (Table 3) for applying these policy levers to policy tools in the higher education policy sector.

Table 3: Types of policy levers in higher education policy tools and other mechanisms

Authority tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulations, legal obligations • Accreditation, audit, external quality assurance • Performance-based funding (for core institutional funding)
Incentive tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding incentives (optional; for additional institutional funding) • Reputational incentives: ranking, benchmarking
Capacity tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support programme with targeted project funding • Supporting tools (e.g. self-assessments) • Specialised organisations/organisational units to support policy • Optional institutional reviews • Optional standards and guidelines

Symbolic tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy statements (without accompanying policy measures) • Quality labels • Awards
Learning tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning resources, guidelines • Thematic networks, conferences

Source: Farnell (2020), using the categorisation by Schneider and Ingram (1990)






As can be seen from the table, more regulatory and coercive tools such as accreditation, performance-based funding and legal obligations fall under authority tools while softer approaches such as policy statements or guidelines are linked to symbolic tools and learning tools, respectively. The TEFCE Toolbox, as an institutional self-reflection tool resides in the middle of this spectrum under the capacity tools (combining as it does elements of institutional review and a self-assessment). However, as part of the top-down approach, several policy levers would be used simultaneously to create synergies among the tools. The next section describes a potential top-down approach, highlighting the most promising policy levers and underlying policy options at the EU and EHEA level.

1.2 Applying policy levers at EU and EHEA level

In the analysis below, we provide an overview of steps that could be taken for top-down policy measures at the EHEA and the EU. In a timeframe of the next ten years (2020-2030), four policy levers are particularly promising in promoting top-down systematic transformation towards community-engaged European higher education sector: symbolic tools, learning tools, capacity tools and incentive tools. The only policy lever not recommended for a top-down approach (at least in the early stages) are 'authority tools' such as regulations, legal obligations, mandatory performance-based funding since the measures might promote counterproductive actions to authentic community engagement as envisioned by the TEFCE project. The key argument against such tools is their prematurity since universities first need to explore and accept community engagement as a valuable approach to addressing societal challenges that can both address the needs of community members and improve the university's key missions – teaching and research (Farnell, 2020).

Table 4 presents a proposal of what concrete policies could be applied at the European Higher Education Area level (i.e. within the Bologna Process) and what policies could be developed at the European Union level.

Table 4: Top-down measures at EHEA and EU level by policy lever

POLICY LEVER	MEASURES AT EHEA LEVEL	MEASURES AT EU LEVEL	COMMENTS
Symbolic	Community engagement as a priority in Ministerial communiqué 2020 	Community engagement as a priority in ET 2030 document 	Ensure synergy with R&D policy and with programmes like Horizon 2020, Erasmus+ and others.
Learning	Setting up organisational structures for community engagement (thematic WG) 	Setting up organisational structures for community engagement (thematic WG) 	
	Policy-learning via peer-learning activities	Policy-learning via peer-learning activities 	Use TEFCE Toolbox as the basis for PLAs
Capacity building / incentives	N/A	Building university capacities for engagement through support measures	
		1. New targeted funding stream for community engagement	Ideal scenario: funding for universities to build community engagement using TEFCE Toolbox as the basis.
		2. Developing a new tool for mapping community engagement in Europe	Ideal scenario: endorsement of TEFCE Toolbox ; funding for building community engagement using Toolbox
		3. Incorporating community engagement into existing programmes	Realistic scenario: See the section below for list of potential synergies with existing programmes.

The proposed policies presented in Table 4 are described in more detail below. The adoption of the TEFCE framework in the European context is reviewed through the lens of Rogers' diffusion theory, considering five categories of innovation adopters in society: innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority and laggards (Rogers, 2010).

3.2.1 Begin with policy statements supporting community engagement

A precondition for developing meaningful and coherent policy measures for community engagement is to ensure clear statements by policymakers on the importance of universities in our societies, especially in key strategic and operational policy documents. Without this, policy measures will risk being disparate and piecemeal.

Currently, the importance of community engagement is implied in various EU and EHEA policy documents, but the term ‘community engagement’ is not explicitly stated. At the EU level, several policy papers and large-scale initiatives already indicate substantial importance of community engagement in the higher education sector. The *Renewed EU Agenda for Higher Education* (European Commission, 2017) prioritises ‘building inclusive and connected higher education systems’ with ‘civic-minded learning communities’ while citizenship competence is recognised by the EU as one of the ‘Key competences for lifelong learning’ (Council of the European Union, 2018). The European Universities Initiative (European Commission, 2019), which currently supports 41 university alliances, emphasises that ‘universities are key actors in Europe, able to [...] become true engines of development for cities and regions and promote civic engagement’.

Going forward, community engagement should be prioritised more explicitly and coherently in policy documents and synergies should be created across policy priorities and programmes. For example, community engagement could be recognised as a priority at the EU level in the ET 2030 documents and at the EHEA level in the Ministerial communiqué 2020. The policy statements should be coupled with specific programmes such as Erasmus+, Horizon 2020 and R&D policy. Also, the follow-up documents in the post-2020 policy frameworks for higher education should build on the achieved effort and recognise community engagement as a priority on its own, serving the needs of society, rather than a sub-priority of other initiatives.

3.2.2. Follow-up with learning tools in the form of thematic working groups

Once community engagement has been acknowledged as an important higher education policy priority, learning tools can be leveraged to start a dialogue on the best ways forward. Setting up organisational structures for community engagement, such as thematic working groups can be an effective way to initiate such a dialogue. This allows stakeholders to experiment with different approaches and explore the best manner forward. Stakeholders are encouraged to draw lessons from experiences through formal evaluations, hearings and institutional arrangements promoting interaction between target groups and funding bodies/agencies (Schneider & Ingram, 1990). At the EU and the EHEA levels, members of thematic working groups could collectively discuss and develop learning resources and guidelines for community engagement, organise thematic conferences and establish relevant networks. The working groups could utilise the insights drawn from the TEFCE pilot projects to draft new guidelines. Depending on the objectives of the thematic groups, the focus could be on ensuring policy-learning between representatives of national authorities and/or on peer-learning between representatives of universities and their external communities.

3.2.3. Continue with programmes for strengthening institutional capacity

Capacity tools provide information, training, education, and resources to enable individuals, groups, or agencies to make decisions or carry out activities. This approach relies on the assumption that certain actions are not achieved due to barriers that stakeholders face stemming from lack of information, skills or other resources (Schneider & Ingram, 1990). Providing targeted support programmes, expert advice and supporting tools (e.g. self-assessment) for community engagement can help to build institutional capacity at an accelerated speed. Such an approach creates momentum for universities to move towards becoming ‘civic-minded learning communities’ as envisioned in the *Renewed EU Agenda* (European Commission, 2017). During the TEFCE project, it was recognised that there is little value in starting a capacity-building initiative by trying to convince sceptics of why the initiative is worthwhile since it might face at best resistance or at worst ‘gaming’. Instead, initial steps should be taken to target policies towards institutions with an intrinsic interest (*innovators and early adopters*) in strengthening their community engagement.

At the EU level, capacity building can be further supported by ensuring that synergies exist among the existing EU programmes (e.g. Erasmus+, Horizon 2020, ESIF, etc.) for supporting community engagement initiatives at universities. At the EHEA level it should be ensured that guidelines and resources developed as part of the learning working group in the previous step are easily and freely available to universities for capacity building. The TEFCE Toolbox can be used both as a tool for

capacity building and as reference material for knowledge exchange among institutions (as part of peer-learning activities).

3.2.4. Explore transnational learning and capacity tools

Once a critical mass of ‘early adopters’ has started developing their own institutional strategies for community engagement, there is space to explore options for a meaningful transnational tool for connecting universities that are community-engaged. The tool should be developed in a manner that allows reaching ‘early majority’ of universities.

3.2.5. Scaling up through incentives and capacity building

While capacity tools try to remove obstacles for achieving policy objectives, incentive tools rely on tangible payoffs to induce compliance and encourage utilisation. These tools assume that individuals are utility maximisers and will only adapt the tools if encouraged (Schneider & Ingram, 1990). By simultaneously using capacity incentive tools, results can be enhanced by removing obstacles and increasing motivation at the same time. Once there is a critical mass of universities throughout Europe that are committed to engaging with their communities, policy levers such as targeted funding (e.g. a development fund) or other incentives to universities to be community-engaged in a mutually beneficial way become meaningful. Such incentives are likely to engage institutions that could be classified as ‘late majority’ in adopting community engagement tools. At the EHEA level setting up programmes to promote capacity might not be feasible, but multiple policy options could be possible at the EU level.

Three potential policy options at the EU level are:

1. New targeted funding stream for community engagement: This is seen as an ‘ideal scenario’, where dedicated funding is secured for universities to build community engagement, using the TEFCE Toolbox as the basis.
2. Developing a new tool for mapping community engagement in Europe: This is also seen as an ‘ideal scenario’, where the TEFCE Toolbox is endorsed at the EU level, and funding for building community engagement is provided when using the TEFCE Toolbox.
3. Incorporating community engagement into existing programmes: This is seen as the most ‘realistic scenario’, especially in short to medium term.

Several promising programmes already existed at the EU level that could be leveraged for the third and most realistic scenario. Erasmus+ is a prime example of a programme at the EU level that often links together capacity and incentive tools by providing funding for projects focused on EU priorities. Community Engagement activities can be incorporated in a large number of sub-programmes such as Key Action 1 (Individual mobility), Key Action 2 (Strategic partnerships; Knowledge alliances) or Key Action 3 (Policy reform; Forward-looking projects) (European Commission, 2020). Beyond Erasmus+, several EU-level programmes exist that could further promote community engagement such as Horizon 2020, European structural and investment funds (ESIF), European Institute of Technology, Smart Specialisation.

3.2.6. Consider authority tools only in the longer term

Only after steps 1-4 are carried out would it be advisable to consider ‘harder’ policy levers that would regulate community engagement or steer universities towards community engagement through funding, quality assurance tools or other means. Such tools could be considered in the long term rather than in the short or medium term.

* * *

In conclusion, the TEFCE project team believes that the precondition for ensuring that community engagement becomes a central and integral part of higher education in Europe is to establish supportive and capacity-building measures for universities to carry out such engagement, rather than to opt for policy levers relying on compliance or for prescribed standards. The section also provides recommendations of concrete policies that could support this within the framework of the Bologna Process and through European Commission policies.

This section focused on how community engagement could be further strengthened in European higher education, irrespective of the TEFCE project and its results. However, in the context of the identified recommendations, the TEFCE project team considers that an institutional self-reflection tool such as the TEFCE Toolbox (combining self-assessment and institutional review) could play a key role in any European-level process related to community engagement and could provide a framework to support both policymakers and universities in further developing community engagement in their higher education systems.

4. Building a bottom-up European movement for community engagement

While policy support is essential for system-level change, as described in the previous chapter, the TEFCE project should also work on the assumption that such policy change may not happen overnight. Alternative approaches must be considered. The alternative to top-down is, evidently, bottom-up, which is especially applicable to higher education, because universities are to a high degree autonomous in most countries around the world, which implies that top-down policies do not fully determine actual practice at universities. A bottom-up approach also acknowledges that community engagement is context-specific and cannot work on the basis of 'one size fits all'.

Besides, community engagement is already widespread despite the lack of supporting policies, which suggests that there is a rich foundation to explore the bottom-up options to further foster community engagement in European higher education. In the short run, TEFCE representatives may expect that they can fruitfully engage in 'symbolic' policy levers and link to like-minded, intrinsically motivated individuals and institutions for mutual exchange (learning and capacity development).

In this chapter we propose therefore, first, to connect the TEFCE project to existing thematic networks for community engagement, second, to connect it to other European-level university networks, and finally, to build further alliances, initiatives and networks through follow-up projects.

4.1 Identifying individual universities committed to community engagement

The precondition for developing meaningful and coherent policy measures for community engagement is to obtain clear statements by institutional leaders and opinion makers in the European higher education community on the importance of the community engagement of universities in our societies, especially in key strategic and operational policy documents. Looking at this from the bottom-up perspective, the precondition for an initiative such as the TEFCE project to build *alliances of institutions* that are interested in improving their community engagement is to identify institutions that have already made statements supporting community engagement specifically or supporting the university's societal impact more generally. The way forward for such institutions to their community engagement (in a context-specific way that is mutually beneficial for communities and universities) is to apply tools to examine their current practices and environments and plan improvements, to use resources to learn from others and to enhance their community engagement capacities. Since the TEFCE Toolbox precisely meets this need, these institutions will be most likely to be 'early adopters' of such a tool. In turn, the increasing use of the TEFCE Toolbox can also help to build a growing alliance of community-engaged universities.

4.2 Connecting to existing European-level university networks

In the literature-mapping report of TEFCE (Benneworth et al., 2018), a number of the initiatives on community engagement that we analysed emanated from university networks of for community engagement (e.g. the Talloires Network, the UNESCO Chair for Community-based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education, the Global University Network for Innovation, the European Association for Service-Learning in Higher Education and the Living Knowledge Network). Alliances could be made with these groups to further push the agenda forward.

Furthermore, although the four most prominent higher education networks in Europe (the E-4 group: European University Association-EUA, the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education-EURASHE; the European Quality Assurance Network-ENQA and the European Students' Union-ESU) have not been prominent in specifically advocating for community engagement in their work in the last decade, they have been increasingly supportive of the agenda. The EUA dedicated its 2018 annual conference to the topic of 'Engaged and Responsible Universities Shaping Europe', the 2019 European Quality Assurance Forum organised by the E-4 Group focused on 'The Societal

Engagement of Universities' and EURASHE also launched a new European-level project in 2020 focusing specifically on regional engagement ('Mapping Regional Engagement Activities of European Universities of Applied Sciences').

The way to connect to such networks is by presenting TEFCE to them as a new initiative that can be complementary to current efforts in such networks. In other words, connections can be made through applying the policy levers of (peer) learning (whereby the TEFCE Toolbox may also be improved as well—mutual learning is the aim), but also that of persuasion to change current ways of cooperation in such networks. Namely, the TEFCE Toolbox is likely to be more inclusive than many other existing tools in terms of also encompassing engagement with communities with less resources and to address societal needs of disadvantaged communities. Some of the networks listed above may be primarily geared towards, e.g., engagement in the sense of entrepreneurialism rather than community engagement.

To spread the message about community engagement beyond those who are already actively pursuing it, the TEFCE Toolbox and policy recommendations should continue being presented through other channels and networks through which universities frequently interact. In addition to the obvious choice of presenting TEFCE at conferences focusing specifically on community engagement, opportunities should be sought to present the projects at the aforementioned conferences of the E-4 Group, which have the advantage of being large events with high repute, hence effective for spreading messages to new audiences with a high degree of credibility.



4.3 Building other alliances and scaling up: capacity development and incentives

Significant interest in the TEFCE Toolbox and project has been shown by conference participants in conferences, webinars participants and even smaller university (e.g. the YUFE European University alliance). This suggests that there is a large potential 'coalition of the willing' to further community engagement in higher education both in Europe. Globally, this commitment is already reflected in the existence of networks such as the Talloires Network of Engaged Universities. Once there is a critical mass of universities throughout Europe that are committed to engaging with their communities, policy levers such as targeted funding (e.g. a development fund) or other incentives to universities to be community-engaged in a mutually beneficial way become meaningful. A connection from the bottom-up strategy to top-down policy may develop then in the long run.

4.4 Analysis in terms of policy levers

The above can be summarised and detailed in the following Table 5, moving from activities that can be initiated in the short term (on the left and at the bottom) to longer-term options (on the right and at the top).

Table 5: Bottom-up scenarios for supporting community engagement in higher education

Type of policy lever	TEFCE project advocacy	TEFCE follow-up project	Existing thematic networks for CE	European-level networks (EUA, EURASHE, etc)
Capacity building/ Incentive		Creating a basis for European-level comparative tool		
Capacity building/ Learning	Presenting TEFCE Toolbox to targeted European Universities (e.g. YUFE) and other networks	Building a European network of community-engaged universities Building capacities of partner universities  using TEFCE Toolbox	Peer-learning and strategic networking within GUNI, Talloires, UNESCO CBR, CoE and other networks 	Thematic conferences on community engagement
Symbolic / information and persuasion	Advocating policy positions within EHEA and EU structures	Advocating policy positions within EHEA and EU structures		Comm. Eng. as a new topic on agenda Advocating policy positions within EHEA and EU structures

Consequently, the tools that we can apply in TEFCE and potential follow-up projects in the short and medium term are mainly connected to the following policy levers:

- Capacity development and learning at universities and their networks;
- Symbolic statements in support of community engagement.

In a long-term view (within ten years), TEFCE should steadily leverage opportunities from these same policy levers, and in addition might add Incentives, as will be shown in the next chapter.

4.5 Recommendations

In conclusion, the recommendations for TEFCE experts and partners for a bottom-up approach to ensuring the sustainability of the TEFCE Toolbox after the end of the project are the following:

- build a network of TEFCE experts and ambassadors for spreading information and to support additional universities embarking on CE (capacity development);
- continue presenting TEFCE to new audiences (non-community engagement networks);
- build a network of universities interested in developing their community engagement and organise capacity building events with them:

- create alliances with initiatives/projects in universities and their networks on other outreach/third mission, such as HEInnovate, to enrich the orientation on knowledge exchange and business partners with CE as understood in our terms;
- expand the scope of these initiatives to partners beyond Europe, seeing as there is interest in TEFCE from e.g. Asia, Africa and Latin America;
- initiate a follow-up project for further piloting and improvement of capacity-building tools (see next section).

5. Long-term potential of a comparative tool based on TEFCE Toolbox

As emphasised in the previous chapters, the combination of an improvement in EU-level and national policies, as well as the establishment of a thematic European network of universities committed to community engagement, would go a long way in pushing forward the agenda of community engagement in higher education. One last element examined by the Expert Team of the TEFCE project was whether the TEFCE Toolbox could provide the basis for a single transnational tool allowing the comparison of different institutions' level of community engagement, and thus be of interest to EU-level policymakers.

The conclusion of the Expert Team discussions was that the creation of a transnational tool could be considered with the following preconditions and principles in mind:

- The objective of the tool would need to be a combination of a **learning tool and a capacity-building tool** – allowing universities to identify other universities and their community engagement practices.
- The level of analysis of the tool would need to be the **university level** rather than the higher education system level, in order to ensure the principle of context-specific application.
- Any tool developed would need to be constructed in such a way as to **avoid ranking** the performance of institutions or any other forms of direct comparisons of quantitative scores.

Based on the experience of the TEFCE project, the TEFCE Expert Team concluded that a potential direction for such a tool could be in the form a **European Heatmap for Community Engagement in Higher Education**. Using the TEFCE Toolbox 'heatmap' framework that provides a visual guide to a university's level of community engagement, without providing aggregate scores, the European Heatmap could consist of the following elements:

- a **database of universities** that have successfully applied the TEFCE Toolbox, searchable by type of institution, location and other relevant criteria (e.g. socioeconomic context);
- a **database of community engagement practices** of individual universities, based on their TEFCE Toolbox reports, searchable by dimension or level of engagement;
- **visual representations** of the individual TEFCE Toolbox results by university in the form of a colour-coded heatmap.

The European Heatmap would therefore be based on the idea of a searchable database of university institutional profiles in Europe, focused on their community engagement activities and performance. A university wishing to learn more about community engagement could search the European Heatmap database either by searching in a targeted way for specific universities or by searching for institutions that share similar institutional characteristics to their own (e.g. geographic, type of institution, etc.). In more practical terms, a European Heatmap tool could adopt a similar approach to the U-Multirank tool (<http://www.umultirank.eu>), by providing accessible, colour-coded information on the level of a university's performance (in this case in the area of community engagement). The difference to U-Multirank would be that the European Heatmap tool would need to provide qualitative information on the types of community engagement practices undertaken by each university to provide the basis for a peer-learning process.

In the ideal scenario, such a European Heatmap could provide the foundation for launching a future European-level online tool, which could become a unique planning tool for university decision-makers, community engagement practitioners and policymakers, as well as reflecting the interests of community-engaged staff, students and community partners.

Such an idea is not without its challenges, ranging from its technical feasibility, its user-friendliness,

its work-intensiveness and its ultimate use and value to end-users. In the first stage, the feasibility of developing such a European-level tool would need to be considered and piloted with a limited number of universities in a future follow-up project to the TEFCE project. In April 2020, such a follow-up project proposal was developed and has since been approved for funding through the Erasmus+ Key Action 2/Strategic Partnerships programme. The project is entitled *Steering Higher Education for Community Engagement* (SHEFCE) and will last from 2020 to 2023. Its objective will be to build the capacities of universities, policymakers and stakeholders in Europe for mainstreaming community engagement in higher education through four key areas:

1. Developing university action plans for community engagement: Following the application of the TEFCE_Toolbox, five partner universities will develop action plans for community engagement in cooperation with their external community partners.

2. Developing policy recommendations for improved national-level support for community engagement in higher education: The project will develop background reports on the barriers and obstacles in the higher education systems of the partner universities and engage in a dialogue with the respective ministries and EU-level bodies on the potential to address those obstacles.

3. European Online Platform for Community Engagement in Higher Education: The project will develop an online database of good practices in community engagement at HEIs and online learning centre for community engagement.

4. Piloting a European University-Community Engagement Heatmap: Finally, the project will examine the feasibility of developing the aforementioned heatmap for community engagement.

In addition to a consortium of ten partner institutions from six EU Member States, the SHEFCE project will include an Advisory Team consisting of members of the Council of Europe, the European University Association, the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE), the European Student Union and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.

The combined efforts of the TEFCE project and its follow-up SHEFCE project will undoubtedly provide both universities and policymakers with the tools and support to make community engagement a central part of European higher education in the years to come.

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