

EASLHE EUROPEAN SERVICE-LEARNING CAPACITY BUILDING EVENT

FRIDAY 17 OCTOBER 2025 – UTRECHT UNIVERSITY, THE NETHERLANDS

WORKSHOPS

Parallel Sessions – Block 1

Session 1.A – Assessment of Students in Service-Learning: A Collaborative Exploration of Evaluation Practices

Joke Heyman & Franne Schepers (UHasselt, Belgium)

Nicolas Standaert (KU Leuven, Belgium)

This workshop invites educators and practitioners involved in service-learning to reflect together on one of their most common concerns: How can evaluation of students be effectively integrated into their courses? The interactive session offers space to exchange insights, share experiences and brainstorm meaningful and relevant assessment strategies in the context of service-learning.

We begin with a brief introduction to the evaluation of students in service-learning, based on the book *Service-learning in hoger onderwijs – de samenleving als krachtige leeromgeving* (Service-learning in Higher Education – Society as a Powerful Learning Environment), written by members of the Flemish Network for Service-Learning in Higher Education. This shared starting point highlights key concepts, common approaches and current challenges. After this short theoretical introduction, we continue with the main focus of the workshop: a collaborative discussion session. Participants will reflect on their own practices, share both successes and obstacles and consider how evaluation methods can support the transformative goals of service-learning.

In small-group discussions, we explore guiding questions like:

- Should service-learning be formally assessed with a grade, or should we focus more on coaching and formative feedback?
- What exactly do we want to evaluate? Think of personal growth, civic engagement and academic enhancement, but also of community impact, reflection and interpersonal competencies.
- How can we best carry out these evaluations?
- Who should be involved in the evaluation of students? What about fellow students and community partners?

We will use small-group brainstorming sessions followed by a plenary session to gather and discuss key insights. The goal is not to find a single solution, but to inspire one another and collect a range of practical, context-sensitive ideas to strengthen the evaluation of service-learning.

Biographies

Joke Heyman and **Franne Schepers** are staff members for Educational Development, Policy and Quality Assurance at Hasselt University (Belgium). Within this role, they work on projects related to civic education, both at a strategic level and in the implementation of concrete actions within academic programs.

Nicolas Standaert is professor of Sinology at KU Leuven (Belgium). He is president of the European Association for Service-Learning in Higher Education (EASLHE).

Session 1.B – The teacher/researcher perspective: community service-learning practices in times of financial hardships

Frederique Demeijer & Marjolein Zweekhorst (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Netherlands)

Across Europe, universities are under growing financial strain. This also accounts for the Netherlands, where a proposed €1 billion cut to higher education threatens to increase workloads and destabilize long-term academic initiatives. One area especially at risk is Community Service Learning (CSL). While CSL is increasingly valued for demonstrating universities' societal impact, it is often more time-consuming and less institutionally supported than traditional teaching (Boyle-Baise, 2005). In the financial current climate, educators may therefore be forced to scale back their involvement in these engaged educational practices.

Yet CSL has never been more vital. As public expectations rise for universities to help address urgent, complex societal issues – from sustainability to social justice – CSL offers a proven, practice-based way to bridge academic expertise and community needs. For faculty members to remain engaged in these educational practices, CSL should also support their core responsibilities, which are, apart from teaching, research, grant writing, and valorisation. One promising direction is to integrate CSL with research, thereby creating opportunities for scholarly output while maintaining community relevance.

An example of such a course is the Interdisciplinary Community Service Learning (iCSL) course at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. This extracurricular master's module combines interdisciplinary student collaboration with transdisciplinary, real-world engagement, giving faculty the opportunity to co-produce research with students and community partners. It exemplifies how CSL can yield both academic and societal value – even under financial constraints.

In this interactive 90-minute workshop, we will explore how universities across Europe can sustain CSL in resource-tight environments. After a brief introduction, participants will engage in a World-Café dialogue around three key questions: What are the benefits and barriers of inter- and transdisciplinary CSL? How can these be addressed? And what strategies best align CSL with academic excellence in times of austerity? We will conclude jointly by reflecting on our answers.

Biographies

Frederique Demeijer is Assistant Professor of Transformative Learning for Inter- and Transdisciplinary Education at the Athena Institute, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. Her work focuses on addressing complex societal challenges through collaboration in transdisciplinary settings. Her current research explores transformative learning, inter- and transdisciplinary education, student motivation, and community-engaged learning.

Marjolein Zweekhorst is Professor of Innovation and Education in the Health and Life Sciences at the Athena Institute, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. Her work focuses on educational innovation, with a particular emphasis on integrating community engagement and transdisciplinary approaches into higher education. Her research explores how universities can foster meaningful societal impact through education and research.

Session 1.C – Critical Minds in Action: Reflecting Together on AI’s Role in Service-Learning – MIRA-AI

Celina Pinto Leão & Filomena Soares (University of Minho, Portugal)

This interactive workshop invites educators and practitioners to explore the opportunities and dilemmas of integrating Generative AI in Service-Learning (SL). Led by a multidisciplinary team from the University of Minho, the session combines engineering and humanities expertise to offer diverse ethical, pedagogical, and technological perspectives. Framed around the concept of MIRA-AI (Minds in Reflective Action with AI), the workshop encourages participants to “look” (mira) more critically at how AI shapes student learning, community engagement, and academic integrity. Drawing from real-world SL courses at UMinho, the facilitators will present concrete examples where students used AI tools—like ChatGPT—to support community-based projects, enhance reflection, and co-create solutions with local organizations. These cases will spark reflection on AI’s benefits and challenges in civic learning.

Participants will engage in small group discussions to share experiences, explore ethical concerns, and reflect on how AI is (or is not) used in their SL practices. Together, we will co-design practical resources such as prompts, guidelines or examples of AI-supported assignments, which will be compiled and shared with all attendees. The session concludes with a collective dialogue highlighting key tensions—such as innovation vs. authenticity—and an invitation to join an ongoing community of practice.

Who should attend? Educators, SL coordinators, and researchers—particularly from STEM, digital humanities, or interdisciplinary fields—who are interested in critically and creatively integrating AI into meaningful, community-engaged learning.

What to bring: A laptop or tablet. The facilitators will provide access to collaborative digital tools (e.g. Padlet, Google Docs) to support live cocreation during the workshop.

Join us to reflect, connect and co-create ways to use AI ethically and effectively in Service-Learning!

Biographies

Celina Pinto Leão is Associate Professor at the University of Minho. She integrates active learning and data-informed methodologies in engineering education, focusing strongly on Applied Statistics and Numerical Methods. Her recent work explores the potential of Generative AI to foster critical thinking and ethical reflection, enhancing student engagement in community-based learning.

Filomena Soares works since 1992 at the Industrial Electronics Department of Minho University and develops her research work in the R&D Algoritmi Centre. Her main scientific interests are in the areas of System Modeling and Control, with application to biomedical processes and in the area of automation systems. Motor and cognitive rehabilitation has been receiving her attention, using serious games and robots to foster the communication with impaired children/adults.

Session 1.D – Service-learning in the light of the WHO Global Action Plan on Climate Change and Health

Berta Paz Lourido (University of the Balearic Islands, Spain) & Miriam Hervás Torres (University of Granada, Spain)

Higher education institutions belonging to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), as well as those in many other regions of the world, are called upon to consider the policy frameworks of the Green Deal (GD), Planetary Health (PH), the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Health in All Policies (HiAP). More recently, the World Health Assembly (WHO) adopted the first Global Action Plan on Climate Change and Health (2025-2028) in May 2025. This plan aims at integrating health into climate policy. This means a broad perspective of health connected to the environment and sustainability with implications for a wide range of stakeholders, including universities.

In this workshop we will delve into this last policy framework, analyzing its content to better align the scope of service-learning projects to the principles of this GPoA. These are: Adaptability; Holistic approaches and collaboration; Community orientation; Human rights; Environmental justice; Innovation, creativity and technological base; Evidence-based practice; Multisectoral alliances; Financial efficiency; Social determinants of health; Health Equity; Gender Equality/Gender Inequalities and Differences in Needs and Opportunities; Traditional and indigenous knowledge; Strategies led at local and regional level; and Vulnerable populations. Taking into account the above, what implications could be highlighted for the institutionalization of service-learning? How can service-learning experiences be rooted in this recent policy framework towards a more sustainable, healthy and equitable society?

In addition, the workshop is aimed at reflecting on the participants' previous experiences on how service-learning can be a pedagogical approach aimed at achieving the objectives included for each area of action: I) Leadership, coordination and advocacy; II) Evidence and follow-up and III) Measures and capacity-building at the country level. It is expected that this workshop will result in the "Utrecht Recommendation on service-learning institutionalization to foster the Global Action Plan on Climate Change and Health". Participants from all disciplines are welcome.

Biographies

Berta Paz Lourido, PhD, is Assistant Professor at the University of the Balearic Islands, Spain (Department of Nursing and Physiotherapy, Research group Education, Communication and Quality in Health (ECYCS)). She is director of the Innovation Unit in sustainable development, health and global justice through service-learning (iApS2030), president of APSU and vice-president of EASLHE.

Mirian Hervás Torres, PhD, is Permanent Professor at the University of Granada, Spain (Department of Development and Educational Psychology, Research group SEJ-535: Education, Evaluation, and Entrepreneurship). She is a member of the Innovation Unit in sustainable development, health and global justice through service-learning (iApS2030), APSU Board Member, and member of the RIME Association and RIBIE Network. She is the Principal Researcher in the Erasmus+ project SLIPS.

Parallel Sessions – Block 2

Session 2.A – University-Community Partnerships: Building Resilience into your Engagement Practice

Eileen Hoffler & Tracey Gleeson (University of Limerick, Ireland)

This interesting and practical interactive workshop involves collaborative activities, useful templates and thought-provoking group work. It provides the opportunity for facilitators and participants alike to share their experiences of the *Participatory Journey* – their mistakes, challenges, solutions and successes. It encourages participants to think about community-university partnerships in a more deliberate way. It provides the opportunity for participants to begin to build a *Partnership Strategy* and to actively manage and carefully curate their *Partnership Portfolio* by categorising partners using the *Partnership Continuum approach*.

The session explores several innovative ways to build resilience into your engagement practice such as designing useful tools, fostering networks and creating accessible communications. The workshop particularly highlights the University of Limerick Citizens' Assembly – a unique initiative where the citizens of Limerick City and County have the power to decide which research projects receive funding.

Biographies

Tracey Gleeson is a Community Engagement Facilitator with UL Engage at the University of Limerick, Ireland. Since the unit's establishment in 2015, she has supported a wide range of university-community collaborations through civic and community engagement initiatives at local, national, and international levels. Tracey brings many years of experience in both the NGO and academic sectors in Ireland. She has previously worked with the Irish Peace Institute, Co-operation Ireland, and the Centre for International Co-operation.

Eileen Hoffler is a Community Engagement Facilitator with UL Engage at the University of Limerick, Ireland. Given her strong background in social justice and development education, Eileen's portfolio

focuses particularly on community-engaged learning, support for disadvantaged communities, and international education collaborations. Prior to joining UL, Eileen worked with communities in sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia specialising in the areas of community engagement, vocational education, adult education and international youth work.

Session 2.B – Exploring the nexus of Citizen Science and Service Learning Practices: an interactive inspirational workshop

Sarju Sing Rai & Marjolein Zweekhorst (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Netherlands)

With the increasing interest and commitment among higher education institutions (HEIs) to support and foster societal engagement in research and education, more and more engaged practices and approaches are being adopted and embedded within HEIs. One of such approaches is the UNESCO (2021) recommended Open Science (OS) framework that focus on two domains of engagement – viz. “Open dialogue with other knowledge systems” and “Open engagement of societal actors”. These domains promote *Citizen and participatory science* as a praxis for societal engagement, and offer substantial promise in integration and assimilation within service learning (SL) practices generating more opportunities and impact.

Citizen science (CS) is an umbrella term that constitutes scientific initiatives which include participation of citizens to contribute together in addressing societal problems through scientific processes. While the CS approach is increasingly being adapted in research practices within HEIs, there is still a lingering gap on its application within education practices.

We argue that SL can be complementary to CS practices and values, and together can form a strong community-engaged educational praxis to further strengthen and maximize individual, institutional and societal impacts. This interactive and inspirational workshop invites SL experts/practitioners to partake in a co-creative session to conceptualize the nexus between these two engaged approaches. The workshop will begin with a 15-minute presentation from the facilitators with expertise in SL and OS on the overlapping and complementary values of and current praxis of CS and SL. This will be followed by a 4-round interactive world-café session (1 hour) to discuss and crowd-source inspirational ideas on integration of these approaches, as well as draw implications for education, research and grant acquisition. Finally, a 15-minute plenary would be conducted to share the inspirational and actionable ideas, and distill prospects for collaboration as well as future grant acquisitions on the topics of CS-SL.

Biographies

Sarju Sing Rai is Assistant Professor in "Competencies Development for Societal Transformation through Public Engagement in Transdisciplinary Research and Education" at the Athena Institute, Vrije University (VU) Amsterdam, Netherlands. Sarju is involved in research and education practice on the topics: transdisciplinarity and transdisciplinary learning, competencies development and capacity building to address complex societal issues, and Open science/citizen science practices for societal transformation.

Marjolein Zweekhorst is Professor of Innovation and Education in the Health and Life Sciences at the Athena Institute, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. Her work focuses on educational innovation, with a particular emphasis on integrating community engagement and transdisciplinary approaches into higher education. Her research explores how universities can foster meaningful societal impact through education and research.

Session 2.C – Reflect to Connect: strengthening your service-learning practice through reflection

Joke Heyman & Franne Schepers (UHasselt, Belgium)

At Hasselt University, we developed a civic reflection module to help students critically reflect on their contributions and learning in service-learning courses. Using the DEAL-model (Describe, Examine and Articulate Learning), students assess the impact and added value of their co-creation with external partners. This reflection enhances their learning experience. In this interactive workshop, we will first present the goals, structure and theoretical underpinnings of the reflection module. Then you will gain hands-on experience with the reflection approach by applying elements of the DEAL-model to your own service-learning course. Through guided exercises, we will explore the following questions:

- What elements of your course are already effective?
- What could be improved?
- And why?

In the second part of the session, we will work in small interdisciplinary groups to share insights and discuss challenges and opportunities related to your own service-learning course. This peer exchange will allow you to learn from each other by comparing approaches, identifying tensions and exploring solutions across different contexts.

By the end of the workshop, you should have insights in the reflection module at Hasselt University and understand the importance of reflective practices in service-learning. In addition, through reflection and sharing experiences, you will gain more understanding in your own course and you get the opportunity to enrich your practice through interdisciplinary exchange.

Biographies

Joke Heyman and **Franne Schepers** are staff members for educational development, policy and quality assurance at Hasselt University. Within this role, they work on projects related to civic education, both at a strategic level and in the implementation of concrete actions within academic programs.

Session 2.D – Fostering Intercultural Competence through Community Engagement Learning

Christianne Smit & Markha Valenta (Utrecht University, Netherlands)

In today's interconnected yet polarized world, students must develop the intercultural reflexivity and ethical praxis necessary to engage effectively across cultural boundaries. While immersion in different cultural contexts through CEL projects offers opportunities for transformative learning, it does not automatically *ensure* intercultural growth. Drawing on CEL case studies at Utrecht University—this workshop will: introduce key theoretical foundations of intercultural competence; illustrate how community engagement in an intercultural context can catalyse transformative “rich points”; and engage participants in co-designing a micro-CEL activity for their own courses, so you will leave with concrete designs for intercultural CEL.

Biographies

Christianne Smit is Associate Professor at the Political History group at Utrecht University. Within the Faculty of Humanities, she serves as an ambassador for Community-Engaged Learning and as a fellow for Open Education. From September 1, 2024, she has been appointed as a Senior Fellow at the Centre of Academic Teaching and Learning. In her current research, she reflects on transdisciplinary higher education from a humanities perspective.

Markha Valenta is Director of Education for UGlobe, the Utrecht Center for Global Challenges. The Center cultivates international community-engaged research and education projects with communities and organizations in the Global South, addressing issues related to the UN's Social Development Goals (SDGs). In addition, she teaches a course on the politics and cultures of (informal) migration in which students develop their own (student-led) community-engaged projects.

Parallel sessions – Block 3

Session 3.A – Collaborative Curriculum (Re)Design for Community Engagement: Lessons from the SPACE Co-Learning Programme

Thomas Farnell (Institute for the Development of Education, Croatia) & Bojana Čulum Ilić (University of Rijeka, Croatia)

This interactive workshop shares insights and lessons from the SPACE Co-Learning Programme, a transnational, transdisciplinary Erasmus+ initiative designed to support university staff in embedding community engagement into their teaching and curricula. Rooted in a collaborative, iterative methodology and a peer-driven learning environment, the programme enables participants to co-design curricula making their courses more responsive to community needs and societal challenges.

Drawing on first-year implementation findings, the session will present case studies from participating institutions, sharing successes, challenges and strategies for collaborative curriculum redesign. The core of the workshop features a world-café format, offering participants the opportunity to exchange

experiences and explore critical questions: What is the added value of community partnerships in teaching and learning experiences? What are the main barriers to engaging with communities in curriculum (re)design? How do co-learning approaches compare with traditional professional development models?

Whether participants are just beginning to explore community engagement or seeking to deepen their institution's civic mission, they will leave with new insights, tools and transferable methods for implementing community-engaged teaching and learning practices in their own context.

Biographies

Thomas Farnell works as a higher education policy expert at the Institute for the Development of Education, a think-tank based in Zagreb, Croatia. He has led a series of European-level projects to build the capacity of universities and policymakers for community engagement in higher education, including leading the development of the TEFCE Toolbox: An institutional self-reflection framework for community engagement in higher education. He is the author of the European Commission report *Community engagement in higher education: trends, practices and policies* (2020).

Bojana Ćulum Ilić is Associate Professor at the University of Rijeka (Croatia), where she focuses on engaged teaching and learning, university civic mission and youth civic education. She has led key institutional initiatives in service-learning and community engagement, and currently serves as director of the University of Rijeka Foundation (2021–2026). A Fulbright alumna and contributor to the TEFCE Toolbox, she actively collaborates with civil society and public institutions to advance the role of universities in their communities.

Session 3.B – Engaging with Communities through Photovoice: A Reflective Workshop for Service-Learning Practitioners

Christian Compare & Cinzia Albanesi (University of Bologna, Italy)

This interactive workshop invites service-learning practitioners—faculty, lecturers, and instructors—to explore the transformative potential of photovoice as a method for deepening critical reflection and strengthening community engagement in higher education. Photovoice is a participatory approach in which individuals use photography to *capture lived experiences* and *critically examine the social structures* that shape them. Rooted in feminist and Freirean pedagogies, it encourages agency, dialogue, and collective inquiry—making it a powerful tool for service-learning contexts that centre reciprocity, justice, and co-creation with communities.

The session will begin with a brief introduction to the theoretical foundations of photovoice, followed by a hands-on activity using participants' own photographs. These images, submitted prior to the session (details about images submission will be provided to participants upon registration) will reflect social realities, challenges, or assets from participants' institutions or surrounding communities. Through structured reflection prompts (such as the SHOWeD technique), participants will engage in small-group discussions to explore the stories behind the images, question underlying assumptions, and consider

broader systemic implications. The final part of the workshop will focus on discussing potential translation of this method into participants' own teaching and service-learning and community engagement practices. Together, we will consider how photovoice can be adapted to different institutional settings, support student learning, and encourage faculty reflexivity.

Participants will leave the workshop with a practical understanding of photovoice, experience with its facilitation, and inspiration for incorporating it into their own service-learning initiatives. The session also offers an opportunity to contribute to a broader collaborative research initiative exploring photovoice's role in enhancing awareness of community needs in higher education.

No prior experience with photovoice is necessary—just bring your pictures and willingness to engage, reflect, and see with new eyes!

Biographies

Christian Compare is a community psychologist whose research focuses on participation, inclusion, and the lived experiences of individuals experiencing minority status. Grounded in social justice and intersectionality, his work explores critical and creative approaches to community engagement—particularly strategies that foster meaningful participation and dialogue among youth. His current research examines how participatory methods can support inclusive deliberation and reflective practice in education and community settings.

Cinzia Albanesi is full professor of community psychology, whose research focuses on participatory practices to support inclusion, active citizenship, wellbeing and social justice. She has spent most of her academic life trying to create spaces for youth voice, recognition and empowerment in educational and community settings.

Session 3.C – Hands-on Planning of Service-Learning Projects: Best Practices and Tools (based on *Business Education*)

Olha Mykhailyshyn, Kerstin Haag, Maria Müller-Pulsfuß (Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt)

This interactive workshop introduces practical tools and best practices for designing service-learning courses, with examples drawn from the field of business. While the presented case studies focus on areas such as entrepreneurship and personal finance, the methods and planning tools can be easily adapted to any academic discipline.

The session opens with a digital icebreaker, encouraging participants to reflect on how service-learning is perceived across different fields such as social work, psychology, or law. A brief presentation follows, showcasing the experience of international teaching tandems from the Erasmus+ ServU project, which brought together educators from Ukraine and Europe to co-develop service-oriented courses. Participants will then form small groups to design their own course concepts using fictional case studies and the *Service-Learning Course Planning Canvas*—an adaptable framework inspired by Rüter & Simon

and the Business Model Canvas. This practical exercise fosters creativity while providing structure for aligning academic content, student learning outcomes and community engagement.

The workshop concludes with a group discussion on what is needed to implement service-learning effectively, common challenges in various contexts, and forms of support that can enhance success. Target audience for this workshop are educators, course developers, and researchers interested in experiential, socially engaged teaching across disciplines.

Biographies

Olha Mykhailyshyn is part of the service-learning team at the Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt, Germany, since 2022. Previously, she headed the Service-Learning Center at the Ukrainian Catholic University. Currently, she serves as Hub Coordinator for Central and Eastern Europe and the Middle East in the global Uniservitate program.

Kerstin Haag has been a research associate at the Chair of Tourism and Center for Entrepreneurship at the Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt, Germany, since April 2024. Her main research interests are sustainability, entrepreneurship and hospitality. She focuses on innovative teaching formats and works as a research associate in international teaching tandems organized by the ServU project.

Maria Müller-Pulsfuß is a course coordinator and student advisor at the School of Transformation and Sustainability at the Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt, Germany. With a background in Latin American History and German as a Foreign Language, she has been active at KU since 2006 in teaching, international cooperation, and educational innovation. Maria coordinates and supports service-learning institutionalization at KU.

Session 3.D – Supporting Wellness and Well-Being in Service Learning

Sandra Smeltzer (Western University, Canada), Frederique Demeijer (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Netherlands) & Abbe Brady (St. Mary's University, UK)

Service Learning (SL) offers students powerful opportunities to grow personally and professionally, engage deeply with academic content, and contribute meaningfully to communities. Yet, SL can also be emotionally and mentally challenging – particularly when students are confronted with complex inequities and social injustice. While universities often provide support for students in international placements, those participating in domestic SL endeavours often face similar stressors without adequate resources. This workshop addresses the need for proactive support systems to help students thrive in SL environments, especially as European campuses face rising mental health concerns compounded by climate anxiety, geopolitical tensions, and socio-economic uncertainty.

We aim to:

1. Share practical examples from institutions in the Netherlands, the UK, and Canada on supporting student well-being in SL.
2. Create space for participants to reflect on their own experiences with student well-being in SL.

3. Co-create a catalog of strategies and recommendations for post-workshop application.

This session is designed to inspire action and equip educators with the tools to prioritize student well-being across diverse SL contexts.

Biographies

Sandra Smeltzer is an Associate Professor at Western University in London, Canada. Her areas of research include critical pedagogy, community engaged learning, and the scholar-activist dialectic. She holds several grants on experiential learning in Canada; served five years as a Teaching Fellow at Western's Centre for Teaching and Learning; and is former Assistant Dean Research (FIMS). Dr. Smeltzer is a two-time recipient of the FIMS Teaching Award, the Edward G. Pleva Award for Excellence in Teaching at Western, and the university's Humanitarian Award for her international pedagogical endeavours.

Abbe Brady is an Associate Professor at St Mary's University, London, UK, the Director of the Sport, Well-being, Inclusion and Faith (SWIFT) Research Centre and a HCPC registered Sport and Exercise Psychologist. As well as teaching and supervision in applied sport psychology and sports coaching with specialism's in well-being and positive psychology, Abbe examines critical perspectives and impacts of service learning through higher education.

Frederique Demeijer is Assistant Professor of Transformative Learning for Inter- and Transdisciplinary Education at the Athena Institute, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. Her work focuses on addressing complex societal challenges through collaboration in transdisciplinary settings. Her current research explores transformative learning, inter- and transdisciplinary education, student motivation, and community-engaged learning.

Parallel sessions – Block 4

Session 4.A – Unpacking reciprocity within community engaged learning: A Reflective and Creative Exploration

Roos de Jonge & Rahum Pandit (University Medical Centre Utrecht, Netherlands), Karsten Altenschmidt (University of Duisburg-Essen, Germany) & Marjolein Zweekhorst (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Netherlands)

Why do we engage in Community Engaged Learning (CEL)? What does it mean to truly act reciprocally with our partners? One of the long-standing debates in CEL and Service-Learning concerns the involvement of community partners in(to) Service-Learning programs. While reciprocity – in the transactional sense of all parties involved benefiting – can be considered accepted mainstream, there is also a claim for mutuality in the sense of a shared authority and responsibility (Compare et al. 2025, Saltmarsh et al. 2009) for both process and result of knowledge creation. Co-creation as well as sharing is not necessarily balanced, but happens on a range and in different methods.

This interactive workshop invites participants to reflect on their own CEL and SL practices through a blend of critical dialogue, structured reflection, and creative expression. As CEL/SL gains relevance in a time of societal complexity, concepts like reciprocity, mutuality, and co-creation are often used but rarely unpacked. This workshop explores these ideas not as fixed ideals, but as evolving, relational practices. The workshop is ideal for educators, students, researchers, and community partners interested in CEL/SL, inclusive education, and social justice. It offers practical tools and new language for building reciprocal partnerships that are grounded in care, curiosity, and collective responsibility.

Biographies

Karsten Altenschmidt holds a M.A. in communication studies and sociology. Since 2007, he has been developing and co-heading University Duisburg-Essen's center for Service-Learning and Campus-Community-Cooperation (UNIAKTIV), while at the same time driving his freelance consultancy business under his own name. He is (co)author and -editor of several books and articles on Service Learning, delivered a variety of invited keynotes and university workshops and is regularly asked for expert reviews and assessments.

Roos de Jonge is Assistant Professor community engaged learning at the University Medical Center (UMC) Utrecht. She is responsible for the contribution of the patient perspective in all courses at UMC Utrecht. For this purpose, she was engaged in the set-up of the Patient Perspective Program. Roos is also coordinator of two interdisciplinary electives: Wicked problems in Health care and BITT.

Rahum Pandit is Assistant Professor at the UMC Utrecht. As the coordinator of the pharmacology and pharmacotherapy track within the medical curriculum of the UMC Utrecht, he is an advocate of an inclusive learning environment where learning is based on the principles of active participation with a learner-centered approach. He is involved in various functions within the medical and biomedical faculties as coordinator, mentor, and lecturer.

Marjolein Zweekhorst is Professor of Innovation and Education in the Health and Life Sciences at the Athena Institute, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. Her work focuses on educational innovation, with a particular emphasis on integrating community engagement and transdisciplinary approaches into higher education. Her research explores how universities can foster meaningful societal impact through education and research.

Session 4.B – Learning by Serving Society: Practical Approaches for Integration of Service-Learning in Student Mobility

Neli Kalinova-Schmieder (Erasmus Student Network) & Martin Bogdan (Academic Cooperation Association, Belgium)

As civic engagement becomes a growing priority within the Erasmus+ programme, this session explores how service-learning can enhance the impact of international student mobility. Drawing on the 'Enriching Communities through Engaged Mobilities' project findings and five models for service-learning integration in student mobility, the workshop will combine a concise theoretical introduction

with a hands-on World Café activity. Participants will co-design service-learning scenarios that promote student integration, community engagement, and institutional innovation.

Biographies

Martin Bogdan is a policy and project coordinator in ACA where coordinates ACA's several projects on inclusion and societal engagement, as well as the capacity-building training series Inclusion ACAdemy for HEIs and NAs. He is also the co-chair of ACA's Thematic Peer Group "Widening Inclusion in Higher Education", which discusses the management of national and European funding to increase participation of underrepresented groups in international higher education. Since September 2024, he has been a member of the EAIE Thematic Committee Social responsibility.

Neli Kalinova-Schmieder is project and policy officer at the Erasmus Student Network, where she works on projects in the fields of civic engagement, inclusion and sustainability in higher education, and student mobility. She currently coordinates the 'Enriching Communities through Engaged Mobilities' (ECEM) project, promoting active citizenship and community-engaged student mobility experiences. Her work focuses on developing and supporting practices that strengthen the social impact and inclusiveness of international mobility.

Session 4.C – Connect, Share and Grow: A Session for PhD Researchers

Nicolas Standaert (KU Leuven, Belgium)

Are you working on a PhD that involves service-learning or community engagement? Join this session to discuss your research with fellow PhD-students from all over Europe.

Whether you're just getting started or deep into your research, join our supportive community of fellow doctoral students to:

- Share your research: Introduce your research topic to your colleagues;
- Discover new perspectives: Learn what others are working on and gain fresh insights from diverse approaches and disciplines;
- Tackle challenges together: Discuss the hurdles you're facing and hear how others are navigating similar issues.
- Explore collaboration: Uncover opportunities to connect, support each other, and co-present or co-publish.

This session provides a chance to expand your network, find inspiration, and feel less alone in the often isolating PhD journey. You will leave with new ideas and new allies in your research.

Biographies

Nicolas Standaert is professor of Sinology at KU Leuven (Belgium). He is the President of the European Association for Service-Learning in Higher Education (EASLHE).

Session 4.D – Preparing Students for Ethical and Civic Engagement: Strengthening Pre-Engagement Phases in Service-Learning

Alžbeta Brozmanová Gregorová & Zuzana Heinzová (Matej Bel University, Slovakia)

Nives Mikelic Preradovic (University of Zagreb, Croatia)

Engaging students in service-learning offers rich potential for academic and civic development. Yet ethical, meaningful collaboration with community partners requires more than logistical planning or skills training—it demands intentional pedagogical work to shape students’ civic attitudes, moral awareness, and readiness for reciprocal relationships. This interactive workshop focuses on the often-overlooked pre-engagement phase of service-learning—what occurs before students interact with community partners. We argue that student preparation is essential for ethical engagement. Without it, students may unintentionally reinforce stereotypes, breach trust, or cause harm. Through discussion and hands-on activities, participants will explore what it means for students to be “prepared” for community engagement. We will identify the key knowledge, skills and attitudes required for responsible engagement, including empathy, ethical sensitivity, power awareness, and openness to learning. Attention will be given to cognitive, practical, affective, and civic dimensions of readiness.

We begin with short case scenarios that highlight the risks of inadequate preparation. These will serve as prompts to explore gaps and consequences. Participants will then co-create a profile of “the prepared student” and reflect on how these traits can be nurtured in higher education. We will examine pre-engagement tools such as simulations, ethical dialogues, reflective journaling, and interactions with partners. The final part of the workshop turns to the civic component of service-learning and the value of reflection before action. Participants will consider how structured preparation influences students’ mindsets and values before entering community spaces. They will also co-design brief interventions to strengthen this phase in their programs or courses.

This session is intended for educators, service-learning coordinators, program designers, and community engagement practitioners who want to deepen the ethical and civic grounding of their student engagement initiatives. The workshop is part of the Erasmus project CIVENHANCE – E-Service Learning for Boosting Academic Civic Engagement in Rural Areas.

Biographies

Alžbeta Brozmanová Gregorová is Professor of Social Work and director of UMB Engage – University Centre for Community Partnerships, Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, Slovakia. She focuses primarily on volunteering, service-learning, the non-profit sector in Slovak conditions, and participatory approaches in social work. She has been actively working in advocacy and the development of volunteering and service-learning since 2002.

Zuzana Heinzová is Assistant Professor of Psychology at Matej Bel University in Slovakia. She is a member of the core team implementing service learning at MBU and a member of service learning project evaluation committees in national (Angažovaná škola /Engaged School, Slovakia, from 2020) and international (UNISERVITATE Global Award 2024) contexts. Her research focuses on social and

personal responsibility, trait emotional intelligence, emotional regulation, flexibility, and the impact of service learning on students' development.

Nives Mikelic Preradovic is Full Professor with tenure at the Department of Information Sciences, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb and Head of the Chair for Knowledge Organization. She was the first to introduce SL in Croatia in 2006. In 2017, she received the National award Ivan Filipovic for Service Learning in Higher Education. She is the author of the first university textbook on SL in Croatia, based on which the method was brought among the priorities of the Operational Program "Effective Human Resources 2014-2020".