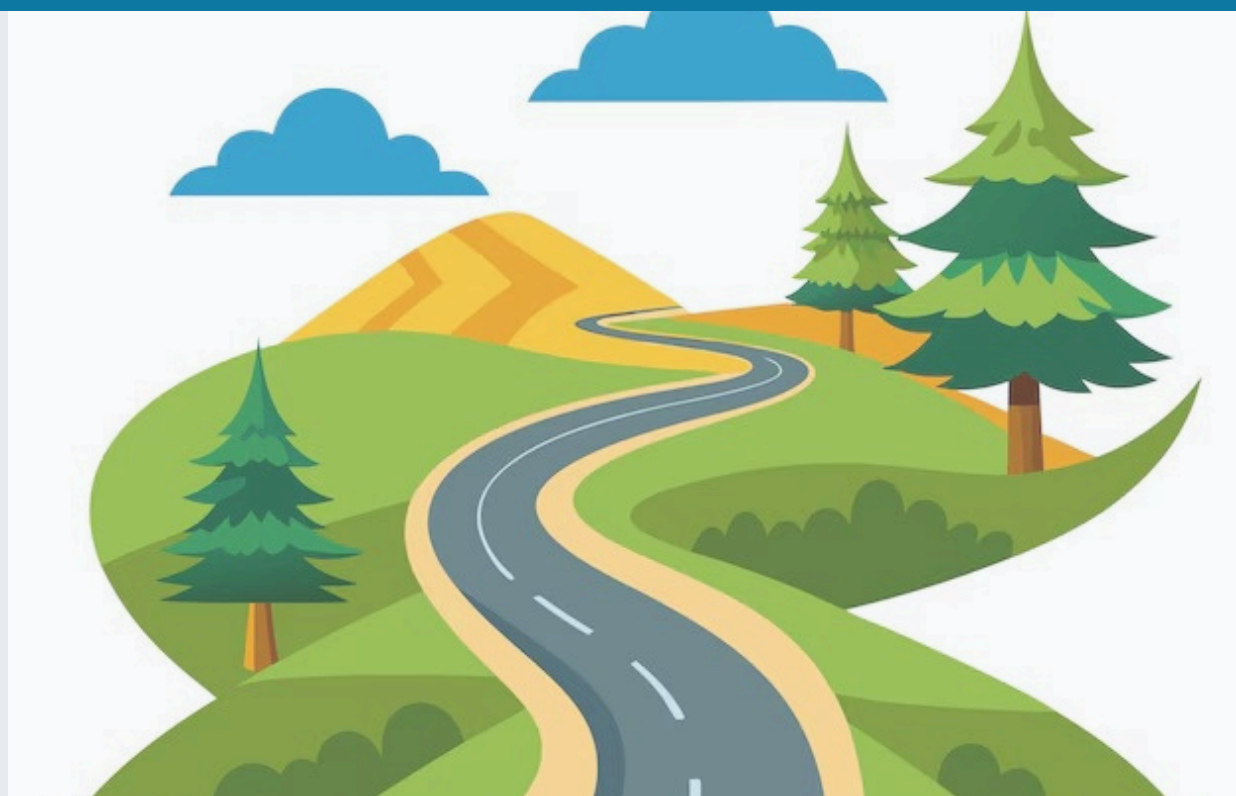




ELIX ROADMAP

European labour mobility-led Career and
Service-Learning System in Higher Education
- ELIX

2024-1-SI01-KA220-HED-000252281



Co-funded by
the European Union



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Introduction

Basic information

European labour mobility-led Career and Service-Learning System in Higher Education

Acronym: ELIX Tender: KA220-HED - Cooperation partnerships in higher education - Call

2024 Round 1 Project number: 2024-1-SI01-KA220-HED-000252281 Leading partner:

University of Novo mesto Faculty of Economics and Informatics (Slovenia) Partners: •

University of Applied Sciences Burgenland (Austria) • University of Economics in Bratislava

(Slovakia) • Social Innovation and Cohesion Institute Fifty-Fifty (Greece) • PYLON ONE

(Greece) • Educons University (Serbia) Total project value: 250,000.00 EUR Funding

information: Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union Start: 1. 09.

2024 End: 31. 08. 2026 Contact person: doc. dr. Mojca Blažič, mojca.blazic@uni-nm.si, +386

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Background of the ELIX project

Rapid technological progress and globalisation have widened the gap between the skills taught by higher education institutions and those needed by the labour market. Employers often see a shortage of graduates with the appropriate practical skills and competencies crucial for success in the modern work environment. The ELIX project aims to fill this gap by integrating real-world experiences and partnerships with industry and entrepreneurship education into curricula, ensuring students acquire the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in the 21st-century economy. In an age of rapid change and uncertainty, lifelong learning and adaptability are becoming crucial. Traditional higher education models often focus on acquiring theoretical knowledge rather than developing transferable skills such as critical thinking, communication and resilience. ELIX recognizes the urgency of equipping students with these essential skills and mindset, preparing them to successfully face complex challenges and thrive in a rapidly changing world. Higher education institutions are responsible for promoting civic engagement and social responsibility among students. Traditional teaching methods, primarily based on lectures, often fail to develop these important values effectively. The ELIX project aims to bridge this gap by integrating Community Service Learning (CSL) into curricula, allowing students to use their knowledge and skills to solve real-world challenges in collaboration with local communities and organizations. By integrating CSL into the curriculum, ELIX enhances student engagement and cultivates critical thinking, problem-solving, and teamwork skills essential for success in today's dynamic workforce.



Description of the project's scope

The ELIX project stands at the forefront of innovation within higher education (HE), intertwining innovative teaching methodologies, digital integration, and entrepreneurial cultivation to foster a holistic learning environment. At its core, ELIX pioneers a transformative pedagogical approach through Community Service Learning (CSL), which immerses students in real-world scenarios, providing direct experiences that transcend conventional classroom boundaries. By integrating CSL into the engagement and ELIX activates critical thinking, problem-solving, and teamwork skills essential for success in today's dynamic workforce. ELIX achieves this by implementing a multifaceted approach centred around Community Service Learning (CSL).

This innovative pedagogical model integrates real-world experiences into the curriculum, allowing students to apply theoretical knowledge in practical settings. Additionally, ELIX incorporates innovative teaching methodologies such as project-based learning, flipped classrooms, and experiential workshops to further engage students and foster critical thinking skills. ELIX embraces digital technologies to enhance learning outcomes and minimize its environmental impact. The project utilizes digital platforms and tools to facilitate student and partner communication, collaboration, and resource access. For example, ELIX might utilize online learning modules, virtual collaboration spaces, and mobile applications to deliver content and facilitate interaction. By leveraging digital solutions,

ELIX not only increases accessibility and flexibility in learning but also reduces paper consumption and promotes eco-friendly practices, aligning with the goal of advancing the green capabilities of the higher education sector. ELIX actively fosters innovation and entrepreneurial mindset among students through experiential learning opportunities and industry partnerships. ELIX enables cross-border cooperation and networking among universities, students, and socio-economic actors in Slovenia, Serbia, Greece, Austria, and Slovakia. By leveraging the diverse expertise and resources of partner institutions and stakeholders, ELIX improves the quality of teaching and learning, fosters cultural exchange, and provides opportunities of a globalized world.





Partners

The University of Novi Mesto Faculty of Economics and Informatics (UNM FEI) is a distinguished higher education institution specialising in providing education, conducting research, and offering advisory services, focusing on management and business for both commercial and non-commercial entities. Accredited since 2006, UNM FEI offers Bologna programs at the first- and second-cycle levels, encompassing fields such as Economic Theory, Accountancy, Finance and Marketing, Business Law, Management, Entrepreneurship and Organization, Information Technologies, Communications, and Human Resource Management. With accredited Bologna programs and a focus on economic theory, entrepreneurship, and organization management, UNM FEI is well-positioned to support the development of career pathways grounded in civic learning principles. Its emphasis on fostering leadership skills and promoting corporate responsibility aligns with ELIX's goal of nurturing students' holistic development and preparing them for active citizenship.

Founded in 2006, Project Management College is Serbia's only institution dedicated to Project Management education. It offers undergraduate, master's, and PhD programs focused on project management methodologies, processes, and technologies. The college follows a 3+2 system for basic and master's studies, with a small PhD cohort. The programs cover business areas like finance, marketing, HR, and sales, with project management as the central focus. The faculty includes over 20 full-time professors and has a strong reputation for research and publications in the field. The college aims to equip students with broad business knowledge and specialized project management skills. PMC Faculty can add massive value to the project, since the organization and its members (professors and staff) have big experience in creating several digital training programmes and adjusting courses.

Similarly, the University of Economics in Bratislava (EUBA) offers valuable insights and resources to enhance ELIX's impact. EUBA is the largest university in Slovakia, offering comprehensive education in economics, management, humanities, and informatics at the bachelor, master, and doctoral levels. With over 7,000 students and 107,000 graduates, EUBA is a member of the European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area. The university offers 19 bachelor's, 31 master's, and 16 doctoral programs, with some available in English, French, and German. EUBA prioritizes quality improvement, internationalization, and fostering collaborations with over 230 universities globally. The university aims to create a dynamic academic environment, promoting innovation, peer relationships, and continuous feedback to enhance internal and external communication.

University of Applied Sciences Burgenland (UAS Burgenland), with its two campuses in Eisenstadt and Pinkafeld, has offered unique degree programmes with the right mixture of theory and practical training for more than 30 years. Today it has got one of the best academic reputations. Thousands of graduates have established their careers in senior positions. They offer a wide range of bachelor's and master's degree programmes in five areas: Business Studies (with a special focus on Central and Eastern Europe), Energy & Environment, Health, Information Technology and Social Work. We take the best of Burgenland, add an intercultural perspective and combine it with innovation and research. Students profit from this and their interest in their well-being – therefore, no one at the University of Applied Sciences Burgenland is thought of as just a number!

Fifty-Fifty (Greece) and PYLON ONE (Greece) bring a wealth of experience in implementing projects that complement ELIX's objectives. Through initiatives like "Elevating Youth Voices with Storytelling & Animation" and "DiTRAL – Digital Training Lab for Trainers working with Disabled Athletes," Fifty-Fifty demonstrates its commitment to empowering youth and promoting inclusivity through innovative educational approaches. Additionally, projects like "BBX – Become Busy Xelerator" align with ELIX's focus on supporting youth entrepreneurship empowerment and enhancing digital skills among young people. Similarly, PYLON ONE's diverse activities in education, environmental protection, social inclusion, and entrepreneurship align with various aspects of the ELIX Project. Their involvement in projects to enhance skills and knowledge among specific target groups further complements ELIX's objectives of empowering individuals and communities through education and innovation.



Primary beneficiaries/target audience

Students are the primary beneficiaries and participants of the ELIX project. They are the focus of initiatives aimed at integrating community service learning (CSL) into the academic curriculum, enhancing their engagement with societal issues, and developing their skills in areas such as empathy, communication, teamwork, and cultural awareness. Through participation in community service projects and experiential learning activities, students are empowered to become active citizens and contribute meaningfully to their communities. Through participation in community service-learning initiatives, students will benefit from direct, experiential learning opportunities that complement traditional classroom instruction.

Participation in community service-learning initiatives enhances students' employability and career readiness by providing them with practical experience and skills relevant to the job market. For example, students might collaborate with local organizations or businesses to address community needs, thereby gaining valuable direct experience while simultaneously deepening their understanding of academic concepts. Also, students may participate in innovation challenges, startup incubators, or internships with local businesses to develop practical skills and entrepreneurial acumen.

HEI educators play a crucial role in successfully implementing the ELIX project. They are responsible for integrating community service learning into their methodologies, and providing guidance and support to students throughout their learning journey. HEI educators also contribute to developing institutional policies and practices that promote civic engagement and social responsibility within higher education institutions. By equipping educators with the necessary training, resources, and support, the ELIX project aims to enhance their capacity to deliver high-quality education and foster a culture of civic engagement among students. The ELIX project offers HEI educators opportunities for professional development and skill enhancement.

Educators involved in the project gain exposure to innovative teaching methodologies, pedagogical approaches, and best practices in community service learning, enriching their teaching repertoire and enhancing their effectiveness in the classroom. ELIX provides mentorship and networking opportunities to connect students with experienced professionals and mentors in their field of interest. By immersing students in real-world contexts and providing them with the support and resources needed to pursue innovative ventures, ELIX empowers them to become catalysts for change and innovation within their communities and beyond. ELIX catalyses the development of innovation and entrepreneurial skills among students, instilling in them the mindset and capabilities needed to thrive in an increasingly competitive global landscape.





Objectives

The ELIX project focuses on employability, career counselling, digital skills, and competencies. It brings numerous opportunities and innovations into higher education, integrating innovative teaching methodologies, digital connectivity, and the promotion of an entrepreneurial mindset, thereby creating a comprehensive and supportive learning environment.

Specific objectives:

- Fostering professional development and lifelong learning among participants.
- Promoting civic engagement and social responsibility, with a focus on Community Service Learning (CSL).
- Enhancing collaboration and partnerships between educational institutions, market actors, and community stakeholders.
- Developing innovative tools and resources for integrating CSL practices into higher education curricula.
- Providing guidelines and training for educators to better support students in their career paths.

Expected outcomes:

- Increased awareness and understanding of local career pathways among stakeholders.
- Strengthened capacity of educators to integrate career learning practices (CSL) into their teaching approaches.
- Improved access to virtual community service-learning experiences through an innovative online platform.
- Enhanced skills and knowledge of students and teachers through educational resources and training modules.
- Improved understanding and application of civic engagement and professional development.

Importance of results alignment with project objectives The ELIX project focuses on employability, career guidance, digital skills and competencies. It brings numerous opportunities and innovations to higher education, combining state-of-the-art teaching methodologies and digital integration and fostering an enterprising spirit, thus creating a comprehensive and stimulating learning environment. 1) Through innovative teaching methodologies and experiential learning opportunities, ELIX seeks to create a dynamic learning environment that inspires students to participate in their educational journey actively, leading to higher attendance and retention rates: OBJECTIVE 1: Improve Student Engagement and Retention Rates (Percentage change in student attendance and retention rates compared to baseline data). Recognizing the importance of equipping students with the practical skills and competencies needed for success in the workforce, the ELIX project prioritizes the enhancement of employability skills and career readiness. 2) By providing students with hands-on experiences, career development programs, and industry partnerships, ELIX aims to empower graduates with the skills and confidence to thrive in their chosen career paths: OBJECTIVE 2: Enhancing Employability Skills and Career Readiness (Percentage of graduates employed in fields related to their academic studies within six months of graduation - 80% of participating students report enhanced communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and digital literacy skills upon completion of ELIX initiatives, indicating increased readiness for the job market). 3) In today's rapidly evolving economy, there exists a significant gap between the skills taught in higher education institutions and those demanded by employers. The ELIX project seeks to bridge this gap by collaborating closely with industry partners to ensure that academic curricula are relevant, up-to-date, and aligned with the evolving needs of the labour market. By facilitating stronger connections between education and industry, ELIX aims to enhance the employability of graduates and drive economic growth: OBJECTIVE 3: Aligning Academic Curricula with Labor Market Demands (percentage of graduates employed in fields related to their academic studies within six months of graduation - A targeted increase of 15% in the percentage of graduates securing employment in fields directly related to their academic background within the first two years of ELIX implementation, demonstrating improved alignment between education and workforce needs).



4) Innovation and entrepreneurship are essential drivers of economic growth and competitiveness in the modern world. The ELIX project is committed to fostering a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship among students. Through initiatives such as startup incubators, innovation challenges, and entrepreneurship education programs, ELIX empowers students to unleash their creativity, develop entrepreneurial skills, and pursue innovative ventures that address real-world challenges: OBJECTIVE 4: Fostering Innovation and Entrepreneurial Skills (number of student-led startups).

Objectives of the roadmap

With a specific goal of fostering collaboration among stakeholders, we organized think tank sessions, inviting labour market actors, career counsellors, representatives from both the economic and non-economic sectors, and the interested local community to participate. Additionally, a comprehensive quantitative study was conducted among students on one side and labour market actors on the other to obtain a clear snapshot of the needs in local career pathways.

Each activity represented in the roadmap is meticulously designed to achieve specific outcomes that align with the overarching goals of the project, particularly:

- Identifying existing local career pathways and refining them to better meet the evolving needs of the community.
- Enhancing career development and promoting civic engagement among students.

By engaging diverse stakeholders in dialogue and collaboration, these efforts aim to foster a shared understanding of local challenges and opportunities. This will enable more effective and targeted measures, including the following actions within future project activities:

- Designing a structured framework for integrating Community Service Learning (CSL) into higher education curricula.
- Identifying effective strategies for facilitating CSL experiences that enhance career development and lifelong learning, benefiting students in their career journeys.
- Defining actionable steps to advance career opportunities within the community.
- Developing a toolkit with guidance materials that equip educators with the necessary resources to support students in developing lifelong career plans.
- Organizing the Triple ELIX Common Teaching and Accreditation Programme around three key pillars.



OUTCOMES

Within Work package 2 – ELIX Career management Pathways Framework based on Community Service Learning Model for Academic Training and Tutorship, we pursued a specific objective:

- To facilitate collaboration among stakeholders, including labor market actors, career consultants, and community representatives, by organizing localized think tank sessions in each partner country to identify and refine local career pathways.

Task 1: Organising and coordinating participants, including labour market actors, career consultants, and community stakeholders for the Localized Career Pathways Thinktank Series.

Task 2: Facilitated focused discussions and interactive think tank workshops over a two-day period to identify and refine local career pathways. The localized think tank sessions, served as a forum for collaboration among stakeholders (labour market actors, career consultants and community stakeholders). By engaging diverse stakeholders in dialogue and collaboration, these sessions aimed to foster a shared understanding of local challenges and opportunities, paving the way for more effective and targeted interventions and to identify and refine local career pathways.

Task 3: Organising conducted in-depth analysis of current trends and challenges in the job market to inform discussions and develop innovative solutions.

Task 4: Collaborating with stakeholders to produce a comprehensive roadmap outlining actionable steps for advancing career opportunities within each partner community. All partner organisations conducted surveys or interviews with stakeholders involved in the think tank sessions, toolkit development, and teaching programme design to gauge their satisfaction with the process and outcomes. The main goal was gathering qualitative feedback from educators and community stakeholders on the perceived impact of the career pathways think tank sessions, toolkit guidance, and teaching programme on student learning and community engagement. Through these tasks was created comprehensive roadmap for advancing career development and civic engagement at the local level. This roadmap will not only identify existing local career pathways but also refine them to better meet the evolving needs of the community to foster a shared understanding of local challenges and opportunities to make a way for more effective and targeted interventions. Based on the results and findings of individual local communities in each partner country, we will continue with tasks 6 and 7.

Task 5: Researching and compiling practical methodologies and resources for integrating Career Service Learning (CSL) practices into teaching approaches within High education Institutions.

Task 6: Aligning the toolkit with the CMS framework outlined in EU Resolutions to ensure relevance and effectiveness.

The development of toolkit guidance for HEI educators, is geared towards building the capacity of educators to integrate the Community Service Learning practices into their teaching approaches. The design of a Triple ELIX Common teaching and Accreditation Programme on CSL will provide a structured framework for delivering quality education and will be anchored on key pillars such as Civic engagement and social responsibility, Career Development and Lifelong Learning, and Collaboration and impactful partnership.



METHODOLOGY

Research gap There is a lack of empirical research that systematically examines the role or impact of community-based learning in various settings, such as professional organizations, local communities, or (online) communities of practice, on the long-term career development of individuals, particularly young people. There is a shortage of studies focusing on how participation in community-based learning affects the acquisition of specific competencies, the enhancement of employability, and career entry and advancement.

Aims

1. Identifying current trends in the labour market.
2. Identifying the skills gap in the labour market.
3. Identifying stakeholders' knowledge of social phenomena connected to the market needs to align them more effectively with career education in academic institutions.
4. Developing a comprehensive plan for improving youth employability (practical aim).

Research questions for Stakeholders:

1. What are the key current trends and challenges in the labour market, and which competencies are identified as essential for successful integration into this market?
2. How do current trends and challenges in the labour market influence the development of new competencies and the identification of skill gaps?
3. What is the stakeholders' knowledge of social phenomena related to market needs that could contribute to more effective alignment with career education in academic institutions?
4. What key elements should a plan for improving youth employability include, and what specific and actionable measures/instructions would be necessary for its effective implementation?

Research questions for Students:

1. What do students perceive as the most significant current social phenomena?
2. Which competencies do students consider essential for successful integration into the labour market, and which would they like to further develop to better respond to the social needs of the labour market?
3. How do students assess various categories of competencies, such as soft skills, career competencies, active citizenship, and digital competencies, in relation to their personal and professional growth?
4. What forms of support do students identify as most necessary and effective in their academic and career development to address social needs within the labour market? How can they be actively involved in shaping their career paths, integrating knowledge about social phenomena (e.g., through online platforms, etc.)?





METHODOLOGY

We employed both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies. In the first phase, we conducted a series of think tank sessions, utilizing panel discussions as a data collection method.

Sample

Milestones of Think Tank series

Country	Target group	Think Tank Formation	Number of participants
Slovenia	Stakeholders	13.–14.11.2024	36
	Students	11.–12. 11. 2024	38
Austria	Stakeholders	12.–13. 11. 2024	38
	Students	18., 25. and 26. 11. 2024	19
Slovakia	Stakeholders	12.–13. 11. 2024	38
	Students	21. 11. 2024	24
Greece	Stakeholders	13.–14.11.2024	18
	Students	11.–12. 11. 2024	20
Serbia	Stakeholders	20. 11. 2024	35
	Students	16. 11. 2024	20

In the next phase, we conducted a survey targeting two key groups: students and stakeholders. For each target group, we developed a tailored questionnaire, which was distributed via email. Participation in the study was anonymous and voluntary.

Milestones of Quantitative analysis (Survey)

Country	Duration	Number of participants: Stakeholders	Number of participants: Students
Slovenia	9. 12. 2024–14. 1. 2025	34	99
Austria	9. 12. 2024–14. 1. 2025	31	68
Slovakia	9. 12. 2024–14. 1. 2025	35	108
Greece	9. 12. 2024–14. 1. 2025	36	105
Serbia	9. 12. 2024–14. 1. 2025	35	101