



## A8.2, O2: Report on the 2021 ECIU Learners' Event



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- Linköping University, Sweden
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- Hamburg University of Technology, Germany
- Universidade de Aveiro, Portugal
- Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain
- University of Stavanger, Norway
- Università degli Studi di Trento, Italy
- Institut National des Sciences Appliquées de Toulouse, France
- University of Twente, The Netherlands

## Abstract

This document presents the report of the work carried out in activity WP8, task 8.2.2: organise a learners' event in 2021 to collect the learners' perspective on ECIU University as well as disseminate the ECIU University learning opportunities. ECIU University since its creation in 1997 is committed to including its learners in all the parts of its organisation. From the learning opportunities where they are the main target to the project itself where, since the beginning of 2021, feedback loops have been created to ensure that the products ECIU University is developing answer their needs. This Learners event was the main event of this dissemination and participation objective as well as the follow-up of an already existing practice in ECIU with the organisation of Students' Congresses where students from all partners universities as well as students' unions were represented to co-shape the university of the future.

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## Symbols, abbreviations, and acronyms

AAU	Aalborg University, Denmark
CBL	Challenge-Based Learning
DCU	Dublin City University, Ireland
EC	European Commission
ECIU	European Consortium of Innovative Universities
INSA	Institut National des Sciences Appliquées
KTU	Kaunas University of Technology, Lithuania
LiU	Linköping University, Sweden
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
TAU	Tampereen Korkeakoulusäätiö sr, Finland
TUHH	Hamburg University of Technology, Germany
UA	Universidade de Aveiro, Portugal
UAB	Universitat Autonoma de Barcelona, Spain
UiS	University of Stavanger, Norway
UNITN	Universita degli Studi di Trento, Italy
UT	University of Twente, Netherlands
WP8	Work Package 8
WP9	Work Package 9

## 1 Introduction

Work Package 8 (WP8) aims at ensuring that the ECIU University, as defined through the project proposal, becomes a reality. It means that the work package focuses on identifying the obstacles for creating a European University by collecting feedback from various parts of the ECIU ecosystem and integrating the latest European Policies.

In practice, WP8 lays the foundation for the ECIU University to be an obstacle-free environment for all its ecosystem, including the learners.

The Learners' Event is the core event of the year when it comes to the learners' community. The objective is to give them a space to learn more on the development of ECIU University and its opportunities as well as to collect feedback from them directly.

Moreover, this event gives to every interested learner the chance to have a real impact on the development of the alliance. Feedback loops and experts of ECIU participate to this Event as well.

The long-term objective is to organise other similar events to interface with the learners' community and include them as active members of the ecosystem and of the project.

## 2 Objectives and Method

To ensure that the learners are an active part of the ecosystem, we focused on strengthening the community. Our central action was to organize a Learners' Event online, on May 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>.

The objectives of the Learners' Event were:

- To gather students' and continuous learners together to meet and build up the community
- Disseminate and build up the knowledge on ECIU University
- Link the Learners community with other actors of the ecosystem
- Organise the learners' reflections on specific topics, directly related to learners.
- Discuss the next steps that the community should take for the next academic year.

As presented above, we had a double objective for this learners' event. First, a dissemination event to the whole learners' community. As we are currently in a pilot phase, the alliance and its opportunities for the learners still need to be disseminated more widely to our different users. Having the buy-in of the students and continuous learners regarding the challenges, the micromodules and the whole Challenge-based approach is crucial. Learners were also invited to share their vision of ECIU University and the recognition of their engagement in the alliance.

Another key objective was to keep strengthening the learner's community that we had started to build at the beginning of the year. This event was the first one open to both the ECIU students' representatives, the whole student community, and the continuous learners. Before that, we had chosen a step-by-step approach for building the community, gradually adding students' representatives, students, and continuous learners.

The event was jointly organised by the Student Engagement Manager of ECIU University and the Work Package 9 (WP9) in charge of communication and dissemination. In order to be adapted to the target audience, we chose to organise it over two days (annex 1) so the length of each day was manageable for the learners.

- The first day focused on the dissemination of the Challenges and Micromodule through an introduction to the challenge-based learning methods and testimonies by 4 students and continuous learners who had taken part in challenges during a previous pilot.
- The second day consisted of a Student Agora, where the learners were invited to reflect on the topics previously presented (Learners' vision of ECIU University and recognition of their engagement)

We issued a registration form to list the participants for both days, to finetune the animations and the time allocated to each topic. 41 learners participated in the event. We also opened the event on the 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> to all learners, registered or not, to ensure that the Agora and the dissemination would gather as many learners as possible. At the end, across both days, we had the participation of 44 learners and others, who were unable to join, enquired about the event afterwards.

### 3 Day 1: The challenge awareness event

To kickstart this two days' event, we chose to walk the learners into the learning opportunities offered by ECIU University. This first day was also the opportunity to present ECIU University as an Alliance as well as hearing about best practices and lessons learned from former challenges and micromodules participants.

#### 3.1 What is ECIU University for the learners

In the first part of the meeting, ECIU University was presented through a video from a student from UAB (annex 2) and an introductory talk by the Local Ambassador of the INSA Group, Marie-Agnès Detourbe. She explained in detail the philosophy and concrete actions of the ECIU University as well as the organisation of the learning opportunities in ECIU University, as the participants were not necessarily fully aware of what ECIU University could offer to them.

This round of presentations was followed by the presentation of the main learning opportunities by one of the ECIU Expert on the topic, Frank van den Berg, from the University of Twente. He focused on the innovative teaching and learning approach adopted by ECIU University, Challenge-Based Learning (CBL). In CBL, learners solve a real-life challenge hand to hand with a challenge provider (such as a company or a local authority). He then put forward the added value of CBL in a curriculum, with a particular emphasis on the link between higher education and the other actors of the ecosystem.

#### 3.2 The testimonies of the learners

After those presentations, the learners listened to 4 testimonies of students and continuous learners who had taken part in a challenge and/or a micromodule in the past semesters. The speakers were:

- Ivona GLIŠIĆ (University of Twente) – Circular City of Enschede
- Timothy James MARSHALL (University of Stavanger) – Intimate Cityscapes
- Armin SHAHAB (University of Stavanger) – Recycling Construct Material Challenge
- Rūta PELIKŠIENE (Kaunas University of Technology) – Transition of Kaunas towards the Circular Economy

They shared their experiences of CBL as well as tips to understand ECIU University challenge offers the semester after. The general feedback from the learners was that even though CBL does require engagement and self-organisation, working on real-life challenges show learners that they can make a real impact by designing solutions to the needs of diverse challenge providers. They also shared that they were eager to take another challenge/micromodule if the possibility was offered to them.

#### 3.3 The panel discussion

The last part of day 1 was a panel discussion chaired by Elena Tsigki from the University of Twente. The aim was to collect all the questions from the whole event and to answer them, so the participants would leave day 1 with as much information as possible. Most of the questions went to the learners who had shared their testimonies: questions related to the level of engagement were the most frequent. The learners reassured the participants by explaining that with some organisation, everything is possible and that CBL is much livelier and interesting than regular classes. The other main interrogation was on the recognition process as the learners have a lot of commitment during their curriculum and they wanted to know how their home universities would recognize it formally. If the Experts from ECIU University answered, it was also the perfect way to end this day 1 as one of the topics for day 2 was precisely recognition.

## 4 Day 2: The Agora

Following this first day of meeting, we gathered again to kick start the Agora, start building the learners' vision of ECIU, and get feedback on the recognition processes for their engagement.

The Agora was then organised around presentations and discussions focusing on specific topics:

- Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11, which is the umbrella theme for all ECU University activities, and the place of learners in ECIU
- The recognition of student engagement

### 4.1 Sustainable Development Goal 11 and the place of the students in ECIU University

After a brief introduction by the student engagement manager, the learners engaged in discussions around SDG 11: "*Sustainable Cities and Communities*" and their vision of the role of the learners in the ECIU University. They shared their points of view and best practices.

The learners fully supported the ECIU University strategy for the next years. They acknowledged that having a unique community and ensuring that every member of the ecosystem has its place within the ECIU University is important. Following up on the presentation of challenges and micromodules the day before, the learners underlined the added value of this innovative type of learning and agreed that ECIU University should keep offering various challenges and their modules around the SDG11. Keeping this focus on the SDG11 also give them the chance to identify real life challenges and to have an impact on their ecosystem. They noted that the topic of the SDG was a good way to make bridges between their studies and the global issues of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

They stressed out that having more direct communication locally could help the ECIU University in reaching its objectives regarding learners' participation. Ensuring that the learners hear about ECIU University would be interesting for them to understand better the opportunities and the flexible learning pathways that the project propose. They closed discussions on these topics and moved to reflections on the recognition of student engagement.

### 4.2 The recognition of the learner's engagement

Recognition of student engagement as an extracurricular activity in the ECIU University was then further discussed. Henri Pirkkalainen, from Tampere University, presented the ongoing work on the ECIU University's recognition processes. He focused more specifically on micro-credentials, a key development the in European Higher Education Area which is also at the heart of the ECIU University's offer for flexible learning pathways. He presented micro-credentials as stackable proof of learning feeding learners' competence passports issued by the ECIU University, which would also encompass the recognition of participation and engagement in the ECIU activities and developments. ECIU University is even looking beyond Credentials and Passports, into solutions to capture the skills developed in learner-owned profiles such as *Europass* or *Credentify*. Through those learner profiles, Henri Pirkkalainen explained, the idea would be to create a skills bank for all students' experiences. Both hard and soft skills would be accounted for in these platforms when ready to use.

The participants welcomed all the initiatives regarding the recognition of learners' engagement in both educational and extracurricular activities. They also added that the agenda of a learner is growing

packer than before and that their will to have an impact through various learning opportunities is becoming a priority for them. That recognition must be designed in a way to give them the chance to participate without dropping a mandatory class: their claim was that ECIU University educational opportunities should be embedded in the academic curricula and their learning outcomes formally recognized.

The day finished with discussions on the development of the learner-owned profile that ECIU University wanted to highlight during this period. Henri Pirkkalainen explained that the development of learner-owned profile is still at an early stage but ECIU University as a team is currently working on actual solutions and tools to showcase skills and experiences. The aim is ultimately to use those profiles to gather all the certificates, micro-credentials and badges earned during the learning time of every student, as well as to offer this solution to lifelong learners.

### **4.3 Follow-up Actions for the Learners' engagement roadmap**

This Learners' Agora was a success regarding the development of the learners' community as it was the first event where students and continuous learners were gathered to share their thoughts on the Alliance. On the second day, we were able to kickstart the discussions directly with the learners and have a clear view on their main concerns. ECIU University is built on the idea of an open ecosystem and co-creation processes: ensuring that every community is heard is the first essential step to achieve this goal. This event was also the beginning of the development of a learners' engagement roadmap. To scale up after the current pilot phase, it was important to organise the community to kickstart a co-developed action plan. The next steps are about building the infrastructures to develop the community as well as keeping the meetings flowing to develop a learners' vision of the future of the ECIU University. We have decided to organise similar events at least once a year to be sure that learners' come together. In parallel, some learners are starting to be involved in the projects of the Alliance through feedback loops: they share their opinions on the various project actions that have a direct impact on them, so the end-product meets their needs.

## 5 Annexes

### 5.1 Annex 1: Planning of the Event

#### 5.1.1 Day 1: The challenge Awareness Event

Activities	Brussels time/CET*	Presenters
Log in time - Zoom	13:45 -14:00	
Opening	14:00-14:10	Benjamin BETON, ECIU University Student Community Engagement Manager (INSA, France)
ECIU University? All about it!	14:10-14:20	Marie-Agnès DÉTOURBE, ECIU University Local Ambassador (INSA, France)
Challenge Based Learning@ ECIU: Something for you?	14:20-14:40	Ir. Frank van den BERG, Senior Educational Consultant (University of Twente, Netherlands)
Mentimeter	14:40-14:45	
Students Testimonials	14:45-15:15	<p><i>Circular City of Enschede, Ivona GLIŠIĆ (University of Twente, Netherlands)</i></p> <p><i>Intimate Cityscapes. Timothy James MARSHALL (University of Stavanger, Norway)</i></p> <p><i>Recycling Construct Material Challenge. Armin SHAHAB (University of Stavanger, Norway)</i></p> <p><i>Transition of Kaunas towards the Circular Economy. Rūta PELIKŠIENĖ (Kaunas University of Technology, Lithuania)</i></p>
Health Break: stretch your legs and do some exercise or grab a drink before next session.	15:15-15:25	
Pannel Discussion	15:25-15:45	Moderator: Elena TSIGKI, ECIU Challenges Operations Coordinator (University of Twente, Netherlands)
ECIU Quizz & Closing Remarks	15:45-16:00	Benjamin BETON, ECIU University Student Community Engagement Manager (INSA, France)

### 5.1.2 Day 2: The Agora

Agenda Item	Brussels time/CET*	Presenters
Log in time - Zoom	13:45-14:00	
Opening of the Agora	14:00-14:10	Benjamin BETON, ECIU University Student Engagement Manager (INSA/France)
Presentation - Student engagement and vision in ECIU	14:10-14:20	Benjamin BETON, ECIU University Student Engagement Manager (INSA/France)
Breakout Sessions	14:20 - 14:55	The Student Agora
Health Break	14:55 - 15:05	
Presentation - Competence Passeport	15:05 - 15:15	Henri PIRKKALAINEN, ECIU recognition Expert (Tampere University/Finland)
Open Discussion - Competence Passeport	15:15 - 15:50	The Student Agora
Wrap up of the event	15:50 - 16:00	Benjamin BETON, ECIU University Student Engagement Manager (INSA/France)

### 5.2 Annex 2: Video of presentation of ECIU University



## Acknowledgements



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