



PROMĒNHANCE

RECOMMENDATION BOOKLET

Cooperation with local authorities, CSOs and HEI for
certifying competences on territorial development

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The Project

PROMEnhance brings together Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) to foster innovative, participatory local development across Europe, engaging communities, local authorities, and universities.

This Erasmus+ project addresses the need for new professional skills and knowledge frameworks to manage complex territorial governance in diverse socio-economic contexts. By creating a collaborative environment for HEIs and CSOs in five countries, PROMEnhance seeks to redefine academic offerings and professional profiles that support inclusive, resilient communities.

Central to PROMEnhance is the co-design of interdisciplinary learning paths that blend theory and practical application. Through agile, modular curricula, the project targets students and young professionals entering the labor market, as well as senior personnel in local authorities. These curricula will equip participants with skills in social innovation, community engagement, and sustainable governance.

This hands-on approach aims to bridge academic training with real-world territorial needs, enabling graduates to lead in participatory planning, social innovation, and community management. Throughout the project, partners and stakeholders had the opportunity to exchange best practices and methodologies, ultimately creating a network of skilled professionals ready to drive territorial development in diverse European regions.

The project did not only address emerging job market demands but also reinforced civic engagement, innovation, and collaboration across sectors, promoting the EU's vision of resilient, interconnected communities. In light of this work, the Recommendation Booklet presents a series of recommendations for the reinforcement of the cooperation between local authorities, CSOs and HEIs for certifying competences on territorial development.

The Booklet

These recommendations ground on the experience of the project partners and are meant to facilitate the dialogue between different institutions for the definition of new professional profiles able to address nowadays complexities responding to the actual needs of the territories and its communities with innovative solutions and by engaging a variety of different stakeholders. This dialogue and the certification of professional competences in territorial development is today hindered by a series of challenges such as the lack of communication channels between the different stakeholders, the different objectives and priorities that are moving their activities, the bureaucratic barriers that especially within universities and local authorities reduce the flexibility necessary to collaborate with other actors, the limited resources.

These and other challenges emerged during the work done by the project partners in the framework of PROMEnhance highlighted the necessity of developing an **ecosystem** able to support and promote the cooperation between different actors in order to sustain the establishment of certified training programs able to respond to nowadays



territorial development needs. With the aim of providing useful insights on how to address these challenges, the booklet provides eleven recommendations that can be considered as the essential founding bricks of an ecosystem able to sustain training programs towards more inclusive and resilient communities. Within this ecosystem, a central role is played by Higher Education Institutions that are the main providers of certified training programs and can serve as a space for enhanced collaboration also between Civil Society Organisations and local authorities, which, in turn, contribute to the certified training programs with their expertise and resources.

For this reason, while the main target audience of these recommendations are HEIs that can use this booklet to access useful insights and resources for reinforcing their cooperation with the other stakeholders, CSOs and local authorities can consult this booklet to receive information on ways to contribute to the development and implementation of certified training programs in territorial development. In order to facilitate the consultation of the booklet, each recommendation is marked by labels that identify the actors targeted by the recommendation: CSO, HEI and LA – the bigger the label, the more relevant the recommendation is for the stakeholder.



1 - Develop Clear Communication Channels and Aligned Objectives

CSO

HEI

LA

Clear communication and aligned objectives are essential to prevent misunderstandings, inefficiencies, and conflicts that can arise when multiple entities—each with its own structure, goals, and approaches—work together. Local authorities, CSOs, and HEIs each bring unique perspectives, mandates, and organizational cultures to a project, which can lead to differences in priorities, expectations, and even terminology. Without clear channels and a shared set of objectives, these differences can slow progress, create redundancy, or result in efforts that don't fully address the actual needs of the territory or its communities. By aligning on goals and ensuring open lines of communication, these entities can streamline their work, avoid duplication, and foster trust—resulting in more cohesive and impactful territorial development initiatives.

Improved communication towards a shared set of objectives can be achieved by:

Schedule Recurring Meetings: Set up periodic joint meetings with representatives from each entity to discuss project progress, challenges, and any required adjustments to strategies. These meetings can help keep all parties on the same page and provide a forum for addressing issues collaboratively.

Create Cross-Organizational Working Groups: Establish small working groups that include members from each organization. These groups can focus on specific areas of the project, such as curriculum design, field training coordination, or competency assessment frameworks. By collaborating closely, these groups can ensure coherence and consistency in their respective areas.

Develop Shared Glossaries and Terminologies: Create a shared glossary of key terms and concepts related to the certification of territorial competencies. This ensures that all partners are on the same page regarding the language and frameworks being used in the project.

Encourage Feedback from All Partners: Regularly solicit input from each partner on how the communication and coordination processes could improve. This feedback can be collected through surveys, feedback forms, or during joint meetings.

Draft and Circulate a Joint Vision Statement: This document should outline the overarching goals, guiding principles, and desired outcomes of the project. By defining these together, each entity can work towards a common goal while respecting its own mandate and contribution.



2 - Create Cooperation Hubs for CSOs, HEIs, and Local Authorities

CSO

HEI

LA

Cooperation hubs serve as centralized networks where CSOs, HEIs, and local authorities can share resources, expertise, and best practices. These hubs help bridge the often fragmented efforts in territorial development by establishing a collaborative environment, engaging academics in community projects, sharing information on existing fundings, aligning CSOs and local authorities interests with the priority and requirements of scientific research and academic teaching,

How to achieve this:

Establish Physical or Virtual Collaboration Spaces: Create online platforms (e.g., shared cloud drives, project management tools) or physical co-working spaces where stakeholders can come together regularly to coordinate and discuss ongoing projects.

Host Regular Multilateral Meetings and Events: Organize recurring events such as workshops, conferences, and hackathons to foster networking and encourage the exchange of knowledge between entities.

Promote and implement common projects: develop community engagement and territorial development projects involving the different actors that can contribute with their different expertise and perspectives, reinforcing mutual understanding, trust and collaboration.

Create Resource Sharing Protocols: Develop guidelines for sharing data, funding opportunities, and personnel, allowing each partner to access resources that would otherwise be limited within their organizations.



3 - Implement Needs Assessment for Training Programs on Territorial Development

CSO

HEI

LA

A needs assessment ensures that training programs are tailored to address the specific skills gaps and knowledge areas that local authorities, CSOs, and communities require. Without this foundation, training efforts may miss key competencies, resulting in a workforce that is not fully equipped for the complex nature of territorial development.

Needs assessment can be achieved through:

Conducting Stakeholder Interviews and Surveys: Gather insights from local authorities, CSOs, and community members to identify essential skills and knowledge gaps in territorial development.

Analyzing Regional Development Challenges: Assess the unique challenges faced in different territories and align training content to address these contextual needs.

Developing a Competency-Based Framework: Use the needs assessment findings to structure training programs around core competencies, ensuring relevance and applicability to local realities.



4 - Develop Graduate and Post-Graduate Programs in Territorial Development

CSO

HEI

LA

Graduate and post-graduate programs focused on territorial development ensure a steady pipeline of certified professionals trained specifically for this field. These programs, offered by Higher Education Institutions, by involving CSOs and local authorities in curriculum design and delivery, can provide students with practical knowledge, relevant skills, and real-world insights that traditional academic programs might lack. This approach supports the development of a well-rounded skill set aligned with territorial needs.

How to ensure the contribution of CSOs and local authorities in HEIs programs:

Collaboratively Design Curriculum Content: Partner with CSOs and local authorities to integrate field-based knowledge, case studies, and region-specific challenges into course materials.

Offer Internships and Field Work Opportunities: Facilitate internships and placements in local authorities and CSOs, enabling students to gain hands-on experience while contributing to real territorial projects.

Secure Funding for Scholarships: Develop scholarship programs funded jointly by HEIs, CSOs, and local authorities to make the program accessible to a diverse student body and build a talent pool committed to territorial development.

Implement Regular Curriculum Reviews: Engage stakeholders in periodic reviews to keep the curriculum aligned with the evolving needs and regulations of territorial development.



5- Empower Teaching Methodologies

CSO

HEI

LA

Innovative teaching methodologies such as project-based learning, service-learning, and competency-based assessments are essential to equip students with practical, adaptable skills. These approaches make learning more applicable to real-world challenges, fostering students' ability to address complex territorial issues through active engagement rather than theoretical study alone.

How to achieve this:

Incorporate Project-Based Learning and Service Learning: Design courses around real-life projects that students can tackle, either individually or in groups, fostering collaboration and critical thinking.

Promote Experiential Learning in the Field: Arrange for students to participate directly in fieldwork under the supervision of local authorities and CSOs, linking theoretical concepts with practical applications.

Engage Practitioners as Guest Lecturers: Regularly invite professionals from the field to conduct workshops or guest lectures, providing students with diverse perspectives and current practices.

Adopt Competency-Based Assessments: Use assessments based on demonstrated skills rather than traditional exams, evaluating students on their ability to apply knowledge in practical scenarios.



6- Promote Community Engagement Projects

CSO

HEI

Community engagement projects enable students, academics and practitioners to gain a deeper understanding of local needs, priorities, and challenges. These projects foster a collaborative mindset by directly involving the communities in the development process, which enhances trust and ensures that outcomes are more meaningful and contextually relevant.

How to achieve this:

Develop Community-Based Projects as Part of the Curriculum: Incorporate projects that require students to engage with local communities, gathering insights and input to inform their work.

Create Collaborative Platforms for Stakeholder Input: Establish forums where community members can voice their opinions and contribute to territorial initiatives, fostering inclusive and participatory development.

Encourage Co-Design with Communities: Work with local leaders and representatives to co-design projects, ensuring that objectives and methods align with community priorities.

Provide Training on Community Engagement Skills: Equip students and staff with skills in cultural sensitivity, conflict resolution, and facilitation to foster effective interactions with diverse community members.



7- Adopt Participatory Methods and Cultural Sensitivity

CSO

HEI

Participatory methods and cultural sensitivity are crucial for achieving meaningful and lasting impact in territorial development. When projects are developed with cultural awareness and actively involve local voices, they are more likely to resonate with community values, avoid misunderstandings, and lead to sustainable outcomes.

To achieve this, students must be engaged in culturally sensitive participatory methods, together with professors and practitioners, which means to:

Provide Training in Cultural Competency: Offer workshops and training sessions on cultural sensitivity and participatory methods to ensure all stakeholders are well-prepared to engage respectfully with diverse communities.

Utilise Participatory Planning Techniques: Apply tools such as community mapping, focus groups, and public consultations to incorporate local perspectives into training exercises.

Encourage Reflection and Feedback: Build in regular feedback mechanisms to incentivise critical reflection among students and incorporate different needs and perspectives into training exercises.



8- Encourage Mentorship and Networking

CSO

HEI

LA

Mentorship and networking are crucial for creating a resilient and skilled workforce in territorial development. Mentorship connects young professionals with experienced mentors, enabling practical skill-sharing and career guidance. Networking, in turn, fosters relationships across sectors—HEIs, CSOs, and local authorities—encouraging collaborative problem-solving and resource-sharing. Together, these initiatives support continuous learning and innovation, helping certified individuals stay connected to evolving best practices in territorial development.

How to achieve this:

Establish a Formal Mentorship Program: identify experienced professionals from HEIs, CSOs, and local authorities willing to mentor others, and clarify expectations for both mentors and mentees to ensure productive relationships focused on skill development.

Create Networking Opportunities: host regular events and webinars, both in-person and online, where professionals from various sectors can share insights, discuss challenges, and explore potential collaborations.

Promote Peer Learning and Group Mentorship: Organize group mentorship sessions in which a mentor meets with several mentees at once, promoting peer learning and collaboration.

Incentivize Participation: provide recognition for mentors, such as certificates, public acknowledgment at events, or access to advanced training opportunities.



Micro-credentials offer a modular approach to learning, emphasizing close collaboration with employers and industry actors. Industry engagement is critical for ensuring the credibility and employability of micro-credentials. Micro-credentials certify the learning outcomes of short-term learning experiences, for example a short course or training. They offer a flexible, targeted way to help people develop the knowledge, skills and competences they need for their personal and professional development.

Key considerations for micro-credential development include:

Establishing robust quality assurance and accreditation processes.

Drawing inspiration from successful models, such as the Dutch vocational education system (MBO), where course providers and industry partners co-create short courses.

Leveraging the [European Digital Credentials Infrastructure](#) (EDCI) to support efficiency and security in how credentials such as qualifications and other learning achievements can be recognised across Europe.

Using the [European Learning Model](#) (ELM) as multilingual data model providing a single vocabulary for the description of learning in Europe.

Examples include the [European MOOC Consortium](#) (EMC) and its [Common Microcredential Framework](#) (CMF), which sets standards for the design and recognition of micro-credentials across European institutions.



10- Develop Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Systems for Certification Programs

CSO

HEI

LA

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) systems are critical for assessing the effectiveness of certification programs and ensuring they are meeting their intended objectives. By tracking outcomes, such systems can provide data-driven insights into which competencies are being successfully developed, identify gaps, and inform improvements. This iterative feedback loop ensures that certification programs remain relevant, efficient, and aligned with both stakeholder expectations and local needs.

To achieve this:

Define Key Performance Indicators (KPIs): Establish measurable indicators, such as participant success rates, competency application in the field, and community impact, to assess the program's success.

Regularly Collect and Analyze Data: Implement periodic assessments, surveys, and feedback forms to gather quantitative and qualitative data on program performance and participant satisfaction.

Engage Stakeholders in Evaluation: Include input from CSOs, HEIs, local authorities, and certified participants to ensure that the evaluation reflects diverse perspectives and priorities.

Implement Adaptive Management Practices: Use M&E findings to adapt certification programs as needed, ensuring they stay responsive to new challenges, feedback, and evolving community needs.



11- Ensure International Relevance and Quality of Degree Programmes

HEI

LA

To enhance the certification's international dimension, align it with European standards and best practices. This includes:

Leverage Erasmus Mundus Measures: designing programmes that are easily recognized and valued in different regions and countries. The Erasmus Mundus programme could support such an initiative.

Engage in European Degree Pathway Projects: to foster deeper transnational collaboration, the European Commission introduced the blueprint for a European degree in March 2024. This initiative supports the development of joint certifications through financial incentives offered by the Erasmus+ programme, ensuring compatibility across EU countries.

Participate in the European Universities Initiative: this initiative promotes alliances of higher education institutions across Europe to enhance mobility, foster innovation, and develop joint degrees. Examples include, EELISA, EUTOPIA, CIVIS, and Una Europa, which focus on creating seamless transnational learning experiences.

Adopt European Standards and Guidelines (ESG): Use ESG as a foundation for designing programmes, ensuring alignment with the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and fostering international recognition.

Engage National and Regional Accreditation Bodies: collaborate with national agencies like to meet accreditation requirements while ensuring compliance with European standards.

Leverage the European Qualifications Framework (EQF): align programme outcomes with the EQF to enhance transparency and facilitate cross-border recognition.



