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UP2YOU

Bottom-up sustainable and inclusive development

Community Index Design and Methodology

Authors:

Patricia Avilés Rodríguez

Candela González Calvar

Organisation: Universidade de Vigo

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. ABOUT THE PROJECT

The UP2YOU project aims to promote cooperation between Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and Higher Education (HE), thus enhancing both sectors role and efficacy in the promotion of sustainable and inclusive development of their communities through the development of new courses, Living Communities Labs and Community Balance Scorecard.

In this regard, the creation of a Community Balance Scorecard (CBS) will support the digital and green capabilities of both HE and CSOs sectors as it can be used to measure the impact of the project on local communities and the environment and will provide a framework for monitoring progress towards the achievement of SDGs. The scorecard can be used as a tool for data collection, analysis and reporting, promoting transparency and accountability.

2. EVALUATION OF THE SOCIAL IMPACT OF THE PROJECT

2.1. An academic approach

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have significant potential to collaborate in promoting sustainable development within local communities. This cooperation, encapsulated in the Quadruple Helix model, fosters innovative solutions to complex social issues, facilitates the transfer of knowledge and skills, and enhances community engagement. However, context analyses conducted to assess the current state of this model in target countries have identified several common challenges to its permanence and efficiency:

1. **Lack of mutual understanding and trust:** A significant barrier to collaboration within the Quadruple Helix model is the lack of mutual understanding and trust among stakeholders. This makes it difficult to identify common goals and develop collaborative projects. Additionally, differences in culture, language, and values can further complicate communication and collaboration. Research by Ollila et al. (2020) indicates that the Quadruple Helix model faces challenges in implementing bottom-up approaches due to differing stakeholder perspectives, interests, and power dynamics. These challenges often lead to communication breakdowns and hinder effective collaboration. Other studies, such as Pemstein and colleagues (2019), have found that a lack of trust among stakeholders can significantly limit collaboration and restrict the flow of information and resources. Unequal power dynamics, as noted by Ozawa and Sato (2018), can also exclude certain groups from the decision-making process.
2. **Lack of resources and support:** HEIs, CSOs, and community groups often lack the financial and human capital necessary to fully engage in collaborative activities. This resource scarcity makes sustaining long-term collaboration challenging.
3. **Bureaucratic and administrative barriers:** Bureaucratic and administrative obstacles can hinder the development and maintenance of collaborative projects within the Quadruple Helix model, delaying implementation and reducing the efficiency of these efforts.
4. **Lack of institutional frameworks:** The absence of robust institutional frameworks can impede the successful implementation of the Quadruple Helix approach. Without clear guidelines, protocols, and mechanisms for collaboration, it is challenging to ensure the model's permanence and efficiency.

To overcome these challenges, it is essential to establish effective communication channels, build trust and collaboration, and create supportive institutional frameworks for bottom-up local community development initiatives.

2.1.1. The UP2YOU Project: Bridging academic knowledge and real-world practice

The UP2YOU project was conceived to address the gap between academic knowledge and practical application by equipping students with the skills and experience needed to engage with communities and promote sustainable development. The project addresses the growing need for professionals who can navigate complex social and environmental challenges, focusing on the integration of technical and social skills and promoting collaboration between CSOs and HEIs. This collaboration aims to build more resilient and equitable communities, where diverse stakeholders work together to identify and address local problems.

Moreover, UP2YOU contributes to several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by promoting education and capacity-building in areas related to sustainable development, social inclusion, and community empowerment. The project aims to develop a new generation of professionals equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to lead transformative changes in their communities and beyond. Overall, its funding will help address pressing social and environmental challenges, promote sustainable development, and build more resilient and equitable communities.

2.1.2. Theory of Change: A framework for Community Index Design and Community-Based Sustainability (CBS)

To systematically guide and evaluate the impact of the UP2YOU project, the Theory of Change (ToC) methodology will be employed in the development of the Community Index Design and the CBS framework. The ToC approach enables the project to clearly articulate its intended outcomes, identify the pathways to achieve these outcomes, and establish indicators for monitoring and evaluation.

1. **Articulating desired outcomes:** The first step in the ToC for the UP2YOU project involves defining the specific social, environmental, and educational outcomes the project aims to achieve. These include increased community engagement, enhanced capacity for sustainable development among students and community members, and the establishment of durable partnerships between CSOs and HEIs. These goals align with the broader objective of fostering resilient and equitable communities.
2. **Identifying pathways to change:** The ToC approach maps out the necessary preconditions and intermediate steps required to achieve the desired outcomes. For UP2YOU, this involves building trust among stakeholders, enhancing resource availability, overcoming bureaucratic hurdles, and establishing supportive institutional frameworks. Each step is critical for enabling the collaboration necessary to achieve the project's long-term goals.

3. **Developing indicators for monitoring and evaluation:** The ToC will include the development of specific, measurable indicators to track progress toward the project's objectives. These indicators will cover various dimensions, including stakeholder engagement levels, collaboration effectiveness, and the impact of educational initiatives on community development. Regular assessment of these indicators will allow the project to make data-driven adjustments to its strategy, ensuring it remains on track to achieve its goals.
4. **Ensuring stakeholder participation:** A key element of the ToC methodology is the inclusion of broad stakeholder participation in both design and evaluation processes. UP2YOU will engage stakeholders from CSOs, HEIs, and the broader community in the development of the Community Index and CBS, ensuring that the perspectives and needs of all relevant parties are considered. This participatory approach will help build the trust and mutual understanding necessary for successful collaboration and long-term sustainability.

Theories of Change help planners and evaluators to be aware on one hand of the intentionality behind designed activities, on the other of the alignment of objectives and, finally, to identify opportunities for synergies and better results. In this theory, the types of change refer to specific transformations that help articulate goals, objectives and develop indicators for monitoring and evaluation. In a well-designed program, both the theory and the types of change sought should be evident.

To support the progress of this methodology, the use of indicators and evaluation tools is essential (Saidani et al., 2019). These indicators must be reliable, clear, simple and flexible, and include both qualitative and quantitative data (Schianetz et al., 2007). According to the WTO (2004, p. 8), "indicators are measures of the existence or severity of current problems, signals of future situations or problems, measures of risk and potential need for action, and means of identifying and measuring the results of our actions".

The diverse and interconnected needs of local communities require careful monitoring and evaluation in line with sustainability impacts. Achieving success in this context, where social, environmental, and economic factors are constantly evolving, necessitates the assessment of progress against sustainable development goals (SDGs) and community-driven indicators. According to Asmelash and Kumar (2019), sustainability indicators are essential in capturing the multi-dimensional aspects of development, categorized across economic, environmental, social, and institutional dimensions.

There is no unanimity in the number and type of indicators to be used, nor on their ability to accurately reflect the sustainability of the community or the success of the interventions (Fernández & Rivero, 2009), and in the successful achievement of the objectives set. For Church and Rogers (2006 pp. 16 ff.) success, under the theory of change approach, "is an arbitrary

determination of progress and can be set at any point on the continuum in the desired direction of change" ... "discussion of success involves listening to stakeholders, creating more opportunities for engagement and participation, and keeping definitions of success broad enough so that all stakeholders can easily see how their interests are being addressed".

2.2. Methodology

In the theoretical framework developed above, one challenge for community-based sustainability projects is to promote social, environmental, and economic development while minimizing negative impacts on local ecosystems and societies. Stakeholders in these communities can act as powerful enablers of sustainability and benefit from the creation of shared value. In this perspective, innovative solutions can be developed, especially in areas facing a lack of resources and/or sustainable management challenges, as in the case of the target regions addressed by the UP2YOU project.

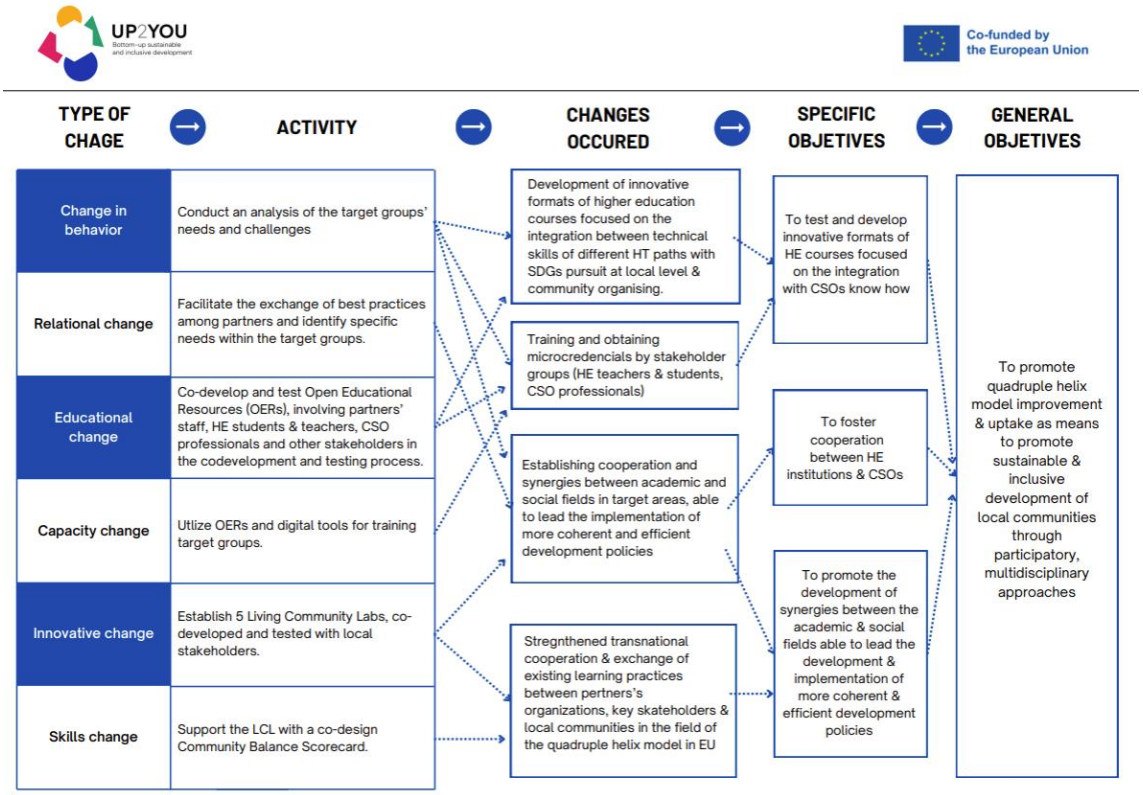
The UP2YOU project aims to promote cooperation between Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and Higher Education (HE), thus enhancing both sectors role and efficacy in the promotion of sustainable and inclusive development of their communities through the development of new courses, Living Communities Labs and Community Balance Scorecard.

In this regard, the creation of a Community Balance Scorecard (CBS) will support the digital and green capabilities of both HE and CSOs sectors as it can be used to measure the impact of the project on local communities and the environment and will provide a framework for monitoring progress towards the achievement of SDGs. The scorecard can be used as a tool for data collection, analysis and reporting, promoting transparency and accountability.

To achieve this, the project intervention has been designed using the theory of change. The theory of change applied to the project is reflected in the table below. Table 1 shows the design of the theory of change applied to the UP2YOU consortium. As can be seen in Table 1, the types of changes proposed are:

- Change in behavior
- Relational change
- Educational change
- Capacity change
- Innovative change
- Skills change

Table 1: Theory of change applied to UP2YOU



Among the activities aimed at bringing changes that will enable the achievement of the specific and general objectives, the following are proposed:

- Conducting an initial analysis of target groups' needs and challenges.
- Exchanging best practices and identifying specific needs.
- Co-developing and testing Open Educational Resources (OERs)
- Utilizing Open Educational Resources and digital tools for training target groups.
- Establishing 5 Living Community Labs, co-developed and tested with local stakeholders.
- Supporting the LCL with a co-design Community Balance Scorecard.

The changes brought about are expected to result in tested and developed innovative formats of HE courses focused on the integration between technical skills with SDGs pursuit; HE teachers, HE students and CSOs professionals trained and gaining micro credentials; cooperation between HE and CSOs; developed synergies between academic and social fields and strengthened transnational cooperation and exchange of existing learning practices. These changes will facilitate the achievement of the specific objectives of the project, namely:

- To test and develop innovative formats of HE courses focused on the integration with CSOs know how.

- To foster cooperation between HE institutions and CSOs.
- To promote the development of synergies between the academic & social fields able to lead the development & implementation of more coherent and efficient development policies.

To define the indicators to be used in the Community Balance Scorecard, the UP2YOU project conducted a thorough review of multiple sources of reference. Among these were the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the 2024 EU Social Progress Index, the Eurydice report, and additional literature and frameworks focused on sustainability and social progress. Each of these documents provided valuable insights into globally and regionally recognised metrics for measuring progress in social, economic, environmental, and educational dimensions.

The selection of indicators was informed by their potential to reflect critical dimensions of community development, their compatibility with the objectives of the project, and their capacity to provide actionable insights. To further refine and validate the selected indicators, a workshop was organized during the project's Hackathon, as part of its participatory approach. This event brought together students, representatives from Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), and educators from multiple countries, ensuring a rich diversity of perspectives. The workshop was structured in two phases to evaluate and prioritise the indicators systematically:

Phase 1: Individual ranking of indicators

In the initial phase, participants were presented with a categorised list of indicators grouped into the four key dimensions: social, economic, educational, and environmental. Each participant individually assessed the indicators and ranked them according to their perceived relevance and importance. This exercise also facilitated their understanding of the indicators' meaning.

Phase 2: Group discussion

In the second phase, participants were divided into mixed-nationality groups to foster cross-cultural collaboration. Each group revisited the individual rankings, discussed their reasoning, and collectively established a new ranking of indicators for each category. This group activity was pivotal in integrating diverse perspectives, encouraging dialogue, and ensuring that the final prioritisation reflected a balanced and multicultural consensus.

Final selection

Following the workshop, the project team analysed the rankings generated by the group discussions. The five most highly ranked indicators in each category (social, economic, educational and environmental) were selected to form the core set of KPIs for the CBS framework. By consolidating the feedback from all groups, the final set of KPIs represents a

holistic view of what the participants deemed most essential for measuring progress in sustainable community development. This rigorous and participatory approach to indicator selection highlights the UP2YOU project's commitment to stakeholder engagement and its recognition of the value of diverse perspectives in achieving sustainable outcomes.

3. EUROPEAN INDICATORS

The selected KPIs are designed to provide a comprehensive overview of the progress made in sustainable development across different dimensions of the project. All indicators will be analysed at the NUTS 1 level, which corresponds to the national level for each participating country. The data for these KPIs will be sourced from official national datasets for each country, ensuring the reliability and relevance of the information. They include reputable data repositories and statistics agencies within each nation. Each KPI will be assigned a clear reference and description.

To represent the collected information, two main types of visualizations will be used:

- **Bar Charts**: These provide a straightforward comparison of quantities or frequencies across countries, enabling clear identification of patterns or disparities.
- **Line Charts**: These visualize changes over time, offering insights into trends and developments for each KPI at the national level.

The KPIs have been grouped into four main categories (social, economic, educational, and environmental) to allow for a focused and structured analysis. This grouping will facilitate the interpretation of results.

By adopting this approach, the project ensures a robust and actionable analysis framework, leveraging national-level data and visualizations that are accessible, informative, and aligned with the goals of the UP2YOU initiative.

3.1. Social indicators

Internet access

Unit: % of households who declare they have access to the internet in any way (mobile, computer or another device).

Description:

Measures the percentage of households who report having access to the internet through any device (mobile, computer, or others). This KPI highlights digital inclusion, which is crucial for participation in the modern information society and access to essential services.

Source: EUROSTAT

(https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/isoc_ci_in_h/default/table?lang=en&category=isoc.isoc_i.isoc_ici)

Young people not in education, employment or training NEET

Unit: % of young people, aged between 15 and 24, not in employment or education and training (NEET rate).

Description:

Represents the percentage of young individuals (aged 15-24) who are not involved in education, employment, or training. A high NEET rate indicates potential social and economic challenges, as these individuals are not gaining skills or contributing to the workforce.

Source: EUROSTAT

(https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/edat_lfse_22/default/table?lang=en)

Social Progress Index

Unit: Points from 1 to 100.

Description:

Represents a composite score that measures social and environmental progress across multiple dimensions, including basic human needs, well-being, and opportunities for individuals. A higher score indicates better social outcomes and quality of life.

Source: SOCIAL PROGRESS

(https://www.socialprogress.org/alti-global-social-progress-index)

Self-reported life satisfaction

Unit: Points from 1 to 10.

Description:

Represents the average score from survey responses where individuals rate their current life satisfaction on a hypothetical scale from 0 (worst possible life) to 10 (best possible life). This KPI reflects subjective well-being and perceived quality of life.

Source: OUR WORLD IN DATA

(https://ourworldindata.org/happiness-and-life-satisfaction)

Gender employment gap

Unit: Difference (%) between the employment rates of men and women aged 20 to 64.

Description:

Measures the difference between the employment rates of men and women within the 20-64 age group. It highlights gender disparities in the labour market, indicating progress or setbacks in gender equality regarding employment opportunities. The rate is calculated using data from the EU Labor Force Survey.

Source: EUROSTAT

(https://ourworldindata.org/happiness-and-life-satisfaction)

3.2. Economic indicators

Access to basic services

Unit: Proportion of population living in households with access to basic services.

Description:

Indicates the proportion of the population living in households with access to essential services such as water, sanitation, and energy. Access to these services is fundamental for economic stability and quality of life.

Source: UNECE

(https://w3.unece.org/PXWeb2015/pxweb/en/STAT/STAT__92-SDG__01-sdgover/001_en_sdGoal1_r.px/)

Unemployment rate

Unit: Unemployment rate, by sex, age and person with disabilities.

Description:

Represents the percentage of people who are actively seeking work but are unable to find employment, broken down by sex, age, and disability status. This KPI highlights labour market health and opportunities for all segments of society.

Source: EUROSTAT

(https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tesem120/default/table?lang=en&category=es.tesem ; https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tesem140/default/table?lang=en&category=es.tesem)

GDP per capita

Unit: Annual growth rate of real GDP per capita.

Description:

Measures the annual growth rate of real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per person. It is a key indicator of a country's economic performance, reflecting the average income and overall economic health.

Source: UNECE

(https://w3.unece.org/PXWeb2015/pxweb/en/STAT/STAT__92-SDG__01-sdgover/008_en_sdGoal8_r.px/)

National poverty line

Unit: Proportion of population living below the national poverty line, by sex and age.

Description:

Refers to the percentage of the population living below the national poverty threshold, based on sex and age. This KPI highlights income inequality and the prevalence of poverty, which can impact overall societal well-being.

Source: UNECE

(https://w3.unece.org/PXWeb2015/pxweb/en/STAT/STAT__92-SDG__01-sdgover/001_en_sdGoal1_r.px/)

Average hourly earnings

Unit: Average hourly earnings of employees, by sex, age, occupation and person with disabilities.

Description:

Measures the average hourly earnings of employees, differentiated by sex, age, occupation, and disability status. This KPI helps gauge wage equality and the economic contributions of different demographic groups.

Source: UNECE

(https://w3.unece.org/PXWeb2015/pxweb/en/STAT/STAT__92-SDG__01-sdgover/008_en_sdGoal8_r.px/)

3.3. Educational indicators

Tertiary education attainment

Unit: % of population aged 25-64 with tertiary education (ISCED 5-8) attainment.

Description:

Measures the percentage of the population aged 25-64 who have completed tertiary education (ISCED levels 5-8). This indicator highlights the educational level of the workforce and is linked to employability and economic advancement.

Source: EUROSTAT

(https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/sdg_04_20/default/table?lang=en&category=t_educ.t_educ_outc)

Lifelong learning

Unit: % of people aged 25-64 who received education or training in the last 4 weeks, with respect to the total population of the same age group.

Description:

Represents the percentage of individuals aged 25-64 who have participated in education or training in the last four weeks. This KPI reflects the culture of continuous learning and adaptability to evolving job market demands.

Source: EUROSTAT

(https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/TRNG_LFSE_04/default/table?lang=en)

Participation in education and training by sex

Unit: Participation rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education and training in the previous 12 months, by sex.

Description:

Measures the participation rate in both formal and non-formal education and training, broken down by sex. This KPI helps assess gender disparities in access to educational opportunities and skill development.

Source: EUROSTAT

(https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/trng_lfs_22/default/table?lang=en&category=educ.educ_part.trng.trng_lfs_12m.trng_lfs_12m1)

Early school leavers

Unit: % of early school leavers (individuals aged 18-24 who have completed at lower secondary education and are not currently engaged in education or training).

Description:

Indicates the percentage of individuals aged 18-24 who have completed lower secondary education but are no longer engaged in education or training. This KPI signals potential issues in retention and educational success among youth.

Source: EUROSTAT

(https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/edat_lfse_14/default/table?lang=en)

At least upper secondary educational attainment

Unit: % of people aged 20-24 who have completed at least upper secondary education.

Description:

Represents the percentage of individuals aged 20-24 who have successfully completed at least upper secondary education, according to the EU Labor Force Survey. The attainment level refers to ISCED (International Standard Classification of Education) 2011 level 3-8 for data from 2014 onwards and to ISCED 1997 level 3-6 for data up to 2013. Completion of upper secondary education may be achieved after varying lengths of study, according to different national educational systems.

Source: EUROSTAT

(https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tps00186/default/table?lang%3Den.)

3.4. Environmental indicators

CO2 emissions

Unit: Total of CO2 emissions per year in tons.

Description:

Measures the total amount of CO2 emissions per year in tons within a given area or population. It reflects the community's carbon footprint and its impact on climate change, crucial for sustainability efforts.

Source: OUR WORLD IN DATA

(https://ourworldindata.org/co2/country/north-macedonia?country=MKD~CYP~ESP~ITA~FRA~TUR#what-are-the-country-s-annual-co2-emissions)

Waste generated

Unit: Total waste generated per capita (kg/year)

Description:

Indicates the total amount of waste generated per capita (measured in kilograms per year). This KPI provides insights into consumption patterns, waste management practices, and environmental sustainability.

Source: EUROSTAT

(https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/env_wasmun__custom_16697136/default/table?lang=en)

Water quality score

Unit: Water quality score, on a scale from 0 to 100.

Description:

Evaluates the quality of water available in the community on a scale from 0 to 100. It reflects environmental health, including the safety of water resources for consumption and other essential uses.

Source: WORLD POPULATION REVIEW

(https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/water-quality-by-country#sources)

Safely drinking water services

Unit: Proportion (%) of population using safely managed drinking water services.

Description:

Measures the proportion of the population that has access to safely managed drinking water services. This KPI highlights the reliability and safety of water supplies, which is essential for public health and environmental sustainability.

Source: WORLD BANK GROUP

(https://databank.worldbank.org/reports.aspx?source=2&series=EG.ELC.ACCS.ZS&country=)

Access to electricity

Unit: Proportion (%) of population with access to electricity.

Description:

Indicates the percentage of the population with access to electricity. This essential service is critical for economic development, quality of life, and environmental sustainability, especially in rural and underserved areas.

Source: WORLD BANK GROUP

(https://databank.worldbank.org/reports.aspx?source=2&series=EG.ELC.ACCS.ZS&country=)