



Study Visits Summary Report



UNIVERSITAT
POLITÈCNICA
DE VALÈNCIA

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INTRODUCTION

The study visits took place between June and September 2011. On average, they were two-days long visits involving two persons from the E3M Research Group. The Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) involved at this step of the Project were: the University of Cambridge, Cambridge (UK); Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT), Dublin (Ireland); Széchenyi István University, Győr (Hungary); the University of Turku, Turku (Finland); Politecnico di Torino, Torino (Italy); Universidad Politécnica de Valencia, Valencia (Spain).

The aims of these visits were: (i) to find the best practices in Third Mission (3M) activities, their main characteristics and reproducibility; (ii) to expose the 3M indicators, which have already been selected through the experts' advice, to further checks to be operated by final users.

The criterion used to choose the Higher Education Institutions to be visited was to include examples of institutions that were more eager for and/or experienced in 3M activities, and examples of those more reluctant to these activities and/or traditionally less experienced in this field. Therefore, they were included institutions from the Anglo-Saxon system and technical Higher Education, which were keener on and experienced in 3M activities, and institutions from the continental and Napoleonic systems, that were less experienced and/or inclined towards Third Mission in general.

The following persons were involved in the study visits:

- **The University of Cambridge:** Roberto Moscati and Lucio Pisacane (Istituto Superiore Mario Boella) interviewed: Mike Peirce, Director of Strategy and Communications at the *University of Cambridge, Programme for Sustainability Leadership*; Sir Mike Gregory, Head of the *Institute of Manufacturing*; Peter Templeton, Chief Executive Officer at the *Institute of Manufacturing*; Rebecca Lingwood, Director of the *Institute of Continuing Education*; Mrs. Liesbeth Krul, Assistant Director; Dr Clara East, Research Policy Manager; Mrs. Renata Shaeffer, European Policy Manager at the *Cambridge Research Office*; Shirley Jamieson, Head of Marketing; Boris Bouqueniaux, Business Support Manager at *Cambridge*

Enterprise Ltd; Nicola Buckley, Head of Community Affairs, Office of External Affairs and Communications at Cambridge Public Engagement.

- **Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT):** Tuija Lauren (University of Helsinki) and Marko Marhl (University of Maribor) interviewed: Tommy Cooke, Head of the *Community Links Programme*; Catherine Bates, Project co-ordinator of *Students Learning with Communities*; Julie Bernard, Access Officer at the *DIT Access Service Programme*; Ron Cooney, Musical Director/Project Manager of the *Ballymun Music Programme*; William Peters, Project co-ordinator of the *Mature Students Access Programme*; Ela Krawczyk, Head of *Futures Academy* and liaison person of the E3M project.
- **Széchenyi István University:** Lucio Pisacane (ISMB), Attila Pausits and Gábor Kovács (Danube University Krems) interviewed: Dr. Peter Tamás Szilasi, Director of Strategy and Development, and Dr. Tibor Döry, Director of the *Knowledge Management Centre*.
- **Politecnico di Torino:** Ela Krawczyk (DIT) and Andrés Carrión García (Universidad Politécnica de Valencia) interviewed: Prof. Enrico Macii, Vice Rector for Research, Technology Transfer and EU Affairs; Prof. Patrizia Lombardi, Planning and Economic Evaluation; Prof. Mario Calderini, Professor in Innovation Management and Consultant to Ministry of Education; Mr. Shiva Loccisano and Mr. Alberto Cuttica, *Research Contracts and Industrial Liaison Office*; Prof. Fulvio Corno, Responsible for E-learning.
- **The University of Turku:** Ela Krawczyk (DIT) and Alfredo Soeiro (University of Porto) interviewed: Tapio Reponen, Vice rector; Petteri Siika-Aho, Planning Officer at the Central Administration; Antti Paasio, *Business and Innovation Development*; Mauno Kangasaho, Innovation Manager; Eliisa Sarkilahti, *Project and Innovation Services*; Pirjo Vuokko, Director, Turku School of Economics; Sanna Maki, Department of Geography; Ari Koski, Project Manager at the *Brahea Centre for Training and Development*.
- **Universidad Politécnica de Valencia:** Lucio Pisacane (ISMB) interviewed: Fernando Conesa Cegarra, Deputy Director of the *Centre for Innovation, Research and Technology Transfer (CTT)*; Mónica López, Deputy Director of the

Continuous Training Centre (CFP).

It is important to point out that the study visits do confirm that there is a wide diversity among the European universities, also for what concerns the Third Mission (3M) field. Therefore, the different aspects and factors, which will be analysed below, should be considered a first attempt of generalising that does not pretend to be fully applied to the whole European Union university world.

The report focuses on and summarises the main ‘good practices’ on which the visits shed light, together with some ‘questions and caveats’, and the general ‘comments’ on indicators.

A. GOOD PRACTICES

The following good practices can be indicated among those identified during the study visits:

AWARENESS AND FULL INSTITUTIONAL RECOGNITION OF 3M ACTIVITIES

Many interviewees from the visited Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) complained about the fact that staff is not enough involved into 3M activities, being these often perceived as an additional burden and a waste of time. It was only from the study visits to two Anglo-Saxon universities, namely Dublin Institute of Technology and the University of Cambridge, that it emerged a full and, somehow, ‘natural’ awareness of the importance and the role of 3M activities. In particular, the University of Cambridge has a clear vision and a dedicate structure to social engagement, with a special focus on the Cambridgeshire county.

This seems to be an aspect related to the role played by the University within the social and economic life of the region, but also related to a peculiar Anglo-Saxon sense of community that perceives the efforts made by public institutions for community engagement as an ordinary activity. This point is supported even more by the uniqueness of the activities of the Cambridge Programme for Sustainability Leadership, which are devoted to create a new awareness of the growing ecological risks among leaders in the economic and political system at international level. The Programme seems to be a vivid example of the general inclination to understand and deal with that transformation, both at global and local level that can be detected at the University of Cambridge.

Moreover, participation to 3M activities is rarely taken into account for career development and resources allocation. This happens only at Dublin Institute of Technology and the University of Cambridge. It is a consequence of the fact that

often the status given to 3M activities is not comparable with that of other traditional Humboldtian missions; thus, they do not receive a full institutional recognition. This would mean for 3M activities a mention in the HEIs statutes and strategic documents. With respect to the Cambridge case, this is not necessary in so far as the university's mission already refers to a contribution to society through education, learning and research. Even more important, a full institutional recognition can result from the implementation of explicit policies in support of 3M activities, and their general objectives and goals. As a consequence, adequate human and financial resources should be allocated to 3M activities. This could also mean an increase of central management of these activities, but here there is a big caveat based on the experience of the University of Cambridge. In fact, in this case, there is a deliberate looseness of management of 3M 'performance', while there is a trusting non-intervention that comes along a general high degree of decentralisation, which is the base of Cambridge organisational logics. Otherwise, it is argued, an active management of 3M activities would, to some extent, suppress the creative diversity, which is one of the main factors of Cambridge's success. As stated by an E3M project consultant, *"the University's stance in all this is permissive and trusting. It may look chaotic, but there are patterns within it, as there are in any human ecosystem"*. The spirit of this point can be retained, even when stressing that Cambridge has a unique tradition of collegiality and a community profile, which is not easily replicable in other universities.

COMMUNICATION

An important consequence of an actual institutional recognition of 3M activities lies in a wide and effective internal, but also external, communication of the activities implemented within the 3M framework. Following the opinion of the interviewees, such communication can be a great instrument to fight the typical reluctance, shown by academic cultures, to be adequately active in fields different from traditional teaching and researching.

INTERNAL FUNDING AND ORGANISATIONAL AUTONOMY

Another consequence of full institutional recognition may also be identified in adequate internal funding of 3M activities, and in the attribution of organisational autonomy to different sets of 3M activities. Examples of this are most of the 3M centers at the University of Cambridge, and the Continuing Education Centre at Universidad Politécnica de Valencia. In some cases, an important sign of the same institutional recognition can be identified in the appointment of an officer with

specific responsibility for 3M activities at central level (e.g. a vice-rector for 3M), as it already happens for research, teaching, funding, and so on. However, it is important to warn that the same sign, though looked from another perspective, may be considered quite controversial, as it can be learned from the lesson of the University of Cambridge (see previous point on institutional recognition).

STAFF SUPPORT

In this framework, a fundamental aspect is the number and quality of administrative staff devoted to 3M activities. The administrative staff should be placed working together with external actors, so as to become the go-between for society and university. The lack of qualified administrative staff in this field, plus the difficulty of current administrative staff to operate in relation to the outside world - e.g. the slow process of payments and administrative issues, as well as the cultural and professional level useful to interact with external partners - can be a powerful obstacle to the development of 3M activities. Therefore, an intense vocational education is necessary in this field, as it happens in Cambridge through PraxisUnico, a non-profit making but market-driven organisation that aimed to deliver training courses on technology and knowledge transfer, and commercialisation issues.

LONG-LASTING PROGRAMMES AND NATIONAL/LOCAL POLICY CONTEXT

Many interviewees stressed the importance of long-lasting 3M programmes as a means to deepen internal appreciation of 3M activities, and to reinforce their public acceptance. The DIT Students Learning with Communities Programme is a good example, which shows the importance of a long term partnership for good results. The best practices used in some of the visited HEIs (Dublin, Turku and Valencia) show the crucial role that local policies (in different 3M areas, such as Social Engagement, Technology and Transfer Innovation, and Continuing Education), and local network of 3M activities might have in order to enhance the implementation of consolidated 3M habits within HEIs.

B. MAIN CAVEATS AND QUESTIONS

HOW TO SPREAD THE BEST PRACTICES?

Everything being taken into account, the study visits show that we are moving towards a greater identification of assets belonging to 3M. This means openness to the outside world by academic institutions, even more than by individual academics (as it was the case in the past, especially in certain disciplinary and geographical areas). The process develops more rapidly in some countries (i.e. Anglo-Saxon countries, with examples of social engagement activities at Cambridge and DIT), and in some areas (i.e. hard-applied sciences), when there is a major emphasis on and a more articulated organisation of 3M activities in technical universities. A formal recognition of 3M activities and opening strategies towards the outside world seem to face much more difficulties in multi-disciplinary universities, especially with respect to Social Engagement (except Cambridge), in continental universities, and in Humanities and Social Sciences. Here, there are 'disciplinary' resistances to opening to the outside world and there are higher difficulties for 3M activities to be acknowledged. The point is the way in which best practices can be spread and become paradigmatic, and what hampers to take this further step.

EXTERNAL SUPPORT

The 3M activities would greatly benefit from external support, both public (i.e. at regional and state level), and private (i.e. economic and financial institutions or foundations), that should result in long-term projects (e.g. DIT case). It is important to scrupulously check the difficulties emerged from a systematic relation between university and external bodies because the study visits are not clear enough on this point. Surely, there are resistances and uncertainties both within academia and society. In some cases, they have been overcome and it would be very useful to describe in detail the best practices of a kind.

ACTIVITIES DIFFERENTIATION

We faced difficulties in differentiating the three 3M components as they were perceived by concerned academics. Both the inadequate institutional recognition, which was previously stressed, and objective factors can explain these difficulties due to the frequent overlapping of three components (Continuing Education/CE; Social Engagement/SE; Transfer and Technology/TT). It is quite complicated to evaluate the quality of services offered and the activities performance in the above mentioned three areas when you leave the (relatively) simple quantitative dimensions (it is somehow what happens in the evaluation of teaching). Would it be certainly beneficial, if and when possible, to evaluate the rate of users' satisfaction?

C. ABOUT 3M INDICATORS

In general, 3M indicators are considered relevant and interesting. In many of the visited Higher Education Institutions, most indicators are regarded as an appreciable step forward and a valuable instrument to extend the possibility to know, quantify and assess 3M activities, and their related processes. The self-assessment of universities in this field is very useful to expand governance (this could be part of the recommendations). The set of indicators, which refers to the presence of 3M in the university's mission and strategy, has also been regarded as crucial by many of the interviewees.

The following doubts are about the present feasibility of some indicators, given the lack of information that affects 3M activities:

- It is still problematic to measure the impact, output and quality of 3M activities; however, is this part of the project?
- Many visited HEIs state that their administrative staff is not currently ready to collect and organise the 3M information (e.g. Politecnico di Torino), but their general comment is that this will be possible in a relatively short time.
- On one hand, it has been stressed the difficulty to differentiate 3M activities following clear limits among the three different dimensions; on the other hand, it has been underlined the importance to differentiate 3M activities not only by type of HEI or discipline, but also by 'entrepreneurial orientation'.
- Someone focused on the importance of an indicator to evaluate the presence of structures like Alumni associations or Associations for service to community.

The exception to the framework just described is the University of Turku. In this case, the administration considered 'not worthwhile' the balance between the efforts to produce indicators and the relative possible gains, and expressed many doubts about the practical implementation of indicators. In the same university, other interviewees stated that information might be collected for a doubtful value added but not at present stage, being the system not ready, requiring too much effort, and being a financial burden. Moreover, it is considered a difficulty to have the same set of indicators applicable to different realities (i.e. faculties or

departments). Also, it is essential to have a specific software, database, network, resources and so on in order to have 'custom-tailored' indicators.

Focus on:

TECHNOLOGY & TRANSFER INNOVATION (TTI) INDICATORS

- Interviewees at Politecnico di Torino stress the lack of an indicator showing the presence - or the absence - of internal regulations on Technology and Transfer Innovation (TTI) activities of academic staff.
- Cambridge interviewees suggest that quantitative measures (e.g. number of consultancy contracts) are useful to understand quantitative scale but, at the same time, they say nothing about the impact and consequences of consultancy for the firms. *"If a company decides to join the stock-market using the result of our consultancy project, how can we assess the impact of this project by analysing the stock-market reaction?"*. Numbers are not useful to identify the nature and the character of technology advice. Another interviewee says that it is difficult to have common indicators for Technology Transfer and Innovation. The same happens when the number of start-ups and spin-offs is involved. There are hundreds of activities going on and it is impossible to trace all of them.
- In Valencia, an interviewee focusing on the number of spin-offs and start-ups warns that the meaning of these activities is not harmonised in different contexts so that it is very difficult to measure its quantity.

CONTINUING EDUCATION (CE) INDICATORS

- Universidad Politécnica de Valencia and Dublin Institute of Technology questioned the use of the number of students involved in 3M since it gives no indication of the quality of programmes. Dublin Institute of Technology added that absolute numbers of students should be replaced by corresponding ratios.
- Politecnico di Torino suggested that a useful indicator could be the number of managers, if any, responsible at decentralised level (faculty or department) for CE activities.
- The University of Cambridge stated that the main difficulties refer to actually evaluate the qualitative aspects. At this point, reservations can be raised with respect to the degree of students satisfaction and their awareness of the actual purposes of attended courses (e.g. to create changes).

- An interviewee from Valencia University stated that it would be better to indicate the number of hours instead of, courses, because hours provide better information about quality than courses (short courses vs year-long courses).

SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT (SE) INDICATORS

- Interviewees from Politecnico di Torino commented the lack of an indicator accounting for university members who are present in public institutions (elected or appointed), as a sign of institutional engagement or influence.
- Cambridge interviewees, on their side, commented the concrete difficulty in quantifying social engagement activities. Every context is different and the case of Cambridge shows a deep integration of social engagement activity into the University mission.

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The consortium formed for this Project consists of the following institutions and coordinators:



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