

Selection and recruitment of societal stakeholders for city engagement

by Rajiv Mahadew (Erasmus University Rotterdam) 9/13/23

Contact information: rajiv.mahadew@eur.nl

Academic Outreach Programme (Connecting our Future)

Students from underrepresented backgrounds may face barriers on their way to higher education and during their studies at higher education institutes. Higher education should be equally accessible to all talented youth, regardless of their social or economic circumstances. Furthermore, we believe our students deserve proper support to complete their studies and fulfil their potential.

The Erasmus University Rotterdam has therefore decided to act. Our extensive outreach programme: 'Connecting Our Future' connects students, parents, educational institutes, researchers, policymakers, and societal partners with the common goal of promoting equal opportunities, both on the way to and in higher education. In our programme, we specifically target students from underrepresented backgrounds, for example:

- Students who are the first in their generation to attend higher education
- Students from families with a low household income
- Students with a migration background

Action Lines

Connecting Our Future is organised in three action lines; Early Outreach, Student-Centred Support, and Building New Blocks. With Early Outreach, we aim to elaborate and strengthen our connection with students from underrepresented backgrounds attending primary and secondary school in the Rotterdam area. With Student-Centred Support, we aim to expand and improve student-centred support for these students from enrollment, introduction and during their studies at EUR. Meanwhile, Building New Blocks is a grant application programme that enables EUR students and staff to apply for financial support for projects promoting equal educational opportunities in primary, secondary, and higher education.

Vision: Promoting equal opportunities for all students

We aim to improve access to higher education, support progress within higher education, and facilitate graduation and employability. In addition to the more traditional student academic outcomes, we focus on student psychosocial outcomes such as a sense of belonging, student wellbeing, and student satisfaction.



Promoting equal opportunities warrants a long-lasting and multifaceted approach. Connecting Our Future, therefore, takes a holistic approach by targeting the diverse causes of inequality that occur at different levels of the system. All initiatives have their basis in an asset-based approach that focuses on the strengths and potential of students, families, schools, and communities whilst at the same time recognizing the cultural and systemic barriers that may preclude students from fulfilling their potential.

Mission: Connecting to develop talent

Creating connections is a central theme of Connecting Our Future. We believe that the broad and complex factors that produce unequal opportunities can be understood as a lack of relationships within and between individuals, groups, organizations, and institutions. We, therefore, focus on (re)building these connections, and we do so in a connected manner with all stakeholders involved.

We work together with numerous stakeholders across our initiatives, including students, peers, parents, educators, educational institutes (schools), societal partners, policymakers, and researchers. Furthermore, we work closely with EUR's IDEA Center (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access), which creates targeted and effective policies to promote a safe learning and working environment and social equity for the entire EUR community. In particular, we collaborate closely with the IDEA Center pillars of Student Engagement, Inclusive Education, and Inclusive Research and Monitoring. Thanks to our tight collaboration, we develop evidence-based initiatives and promote a holistic view of student success and wellbeing throughout the programme

Connecting with the City (City Engagement)

The city of Rotterdam is rich in policymakers, networks, and social organizations who work towards the same goals as the Academic Outreach Programme. We therefore actively seek connection and collaboration with these stakeholders in the city. We maintain an active dialogue with our stakeholders, both during one-on-one conversations and in larger stakeholder meetings, sharing experiences, discussing common challenges, and exploring (structural) ways to collaborate.

Connecting and collaborating with societal stakeholders rather extending our outreach services could be described as a new method of deployment for our programme as opposed to working exclusively with schools. City engagement aims to reach children and youth in different ways and not exclusively through the traditional school stage with a strong focus towards a positive first encounter with higher education. Together with civil society organizations (mainly from the social domains) activities, tailor-made projects and educational assignments are deployed through these civil society organizations working with our target group. All activities together aim to introduce children and young people to the university and higher education in an accessible way.



City engagement interventions are geared towards a soft introduction to achieve this. We offer stakeholders interventions such as digitized campus tours, scavenger hunts, career orientation lesson series, life skills lesson series, reading material with active components (self and family-oriented), and a yearly science fair.

Stakeholder mapping exercise

This mapping exercise is the first step in shaping, narrowing, differentiating, and segmenting stakeholders in your area into domains and (sub)classes. The recruitment and selection of (societal) stakeholders' cycle is a useful tool in achieving this instead of randomly engaging and reaching out to organizations. For this workshop you will test your own current knowledge about the landscape of the types of organizations and domains in your own working environment. It is advised after this session to repeat this exercise once more in the nearby future after doing research. You can also cross-reference if your results differ after examination the second time as opposed to the first time.

1. Take 5-10 minutes to read the introduction infographic poster.
2. Take a couple of minutes to view the city engagement and stakeholder overview document.
3. Take 10 minutes to fill out the blank boxes in the blank version of the city engagement and stakeholder overview document based on your own city/work environment.
4. Scan the QR-code on the introduction infographic poster – this will show an example of the stakeholder analysis matrix. For this exercise we will not use this matrix. This matrix is part of step 5 of the cycle 'create shortlist'. This is where you prioritize which stakeholders you should pursue.
5. Short plenary reflection.



City engagement and stakeholder overview

