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European Children's Universities Network

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1. Executive Summary

EUCU.NET – You Might Well Ask!

"Why do I need a Children's University?"

"*The university is really cool and the professors too! When I'm grown up I'll come back for sure.*" This quote from an eleven-year-old student after having participated in a Children's University illustrates very well one important goal of Children's Universities: Children's Universities already brought way above 1.000.000 children in direct touch with science and scientific research experiencing universities itself. Since the year 2002 every year at least ten to twenty new Children's Universities were established and many of them are already an well-established part of Universities' stargeis to engage with the general public . Children's Universities are a tremendous way to communicate science as well as to provide insights into academic culture and the role of universities for the society.

"Why do Children's Universities need a network?"

The Children's Universities itself as model of science communication and alternative out-of school activities made the transition to adulthood long ago. There has been a change from standalone projects – both geographically and conceptually - to initiatives in an expanded context. EUCU.NET provides a network for cooperation and offers all interested parties, individuals, academic research and other institutions the opportunity to present themselves and pose questions to a community of experts. One of the basic aims of EUCU.NET was to identify lacks in accompanying research and to lay the foundation which helps to determine the overall impact in a concerted manner. Almost 140 registered projects and numerous individuals are involved in the network and participate in the discussion and the advancement of Children's Universities.
Within EUCU.NET experiences and ideas are shared and assistance is given. A special mentoring program supported the establishment of new projects and stimulated contacts between experienced organizers as critical friends on a national and international basis.

"How will the Children's Universities network go on?"

The EUCU.NET community is acquiring understanding on the concepts of Children's Universities located all over the world. This formed the knowledge base for a further development of Children's Universities by drafting implementation guidance notes, rules for monitoring criteria, providing reviews of the current state of the impact analysis, benchmarking of concepts and more, well supported by two major international conferences on Children's Universities.
One sustainable outcome of EUCU.NET is the White Book. It illustrates the overall state of the Children's University approach in Europe. It serves as a reference guide of the concept of Children's Universities throughout Europe - not only for experts in Children's University programs, but also for stakeholders of any kind and for policy makers.
EUCU.NET as bridge builder between Children's Universities activities in different countries has outlined the base frame for international cooperation out of the imminent need for exchange and started the work on pending questions. However, it became obvious during the life span of EUCU.NET that the demand for sustainable networking remains. Consequently, EUCU.NET was established as a non-profit membership association as soon a funding had expired – with a range of 40 founding institutional members, which form part of an attractive, well cross-linked network of word-wide relevance.

2. Summary description of project context and objectives

2.1. The Children's Universities' Approach

"Children's Universities represent the most radical approach to open Universities towards the general public."

As Universities are educational institutions on post-secondary level by definition, it appeared to be a rather startling issue when some of them started to engage with children and young people under the term "Children's University" – typically starting at the age of seven or eight years. Such activities may vary in terms of actual aims and purposes, as well as in regard to organisational involvement, concepts and programmes, the basic principle is consistent to a large extent: Lead managed by universities, academics are preparing lectures, workshops, tutorials or other activities to make their particular fields of research more accessible to young people. Those interventions may range from after school sessions over the year to comprehensive summer schools and are specifically geared towards the needs and prospects of children and young people as the distinctive target group.

The highly innovative aspect of Children's Universities is rooted in the fact that they overstep the boundaries of their traditional mission and assumed purpose in doing so – and consequently, the term "Children's University" substantially attracted public attention from 2002 onwards as a common synonym for activities of all those kinds.

The overriding aim of Children's Universities is to promote interest in science and technology from an early age for all children – irrespective of gender, social background or school achievements. This is achieved by addressing children with scientific issues at low threshold level, as they are well derived from Children's horizon of experience and everyday life – and to by promoting scientists as role models at eye level. This face-to-face contacts represent the major potential to overcome stereotyped notions of science at large - which is deemed to be difficult to understand, elitist, detached or sometimes even boring. And this also relates to the perception of people involved in science and research – and this is notably true from a gender-specific point of view, as selected impact analyses has indicated.

All in all, this shall bring about a change in Children's individual perception of careers in science, when narrow images relating to scientific roles and careers can be reconceived – even if they remain vague or dreamful. Consequently, Children's Universities provide the framework for developing a self-reflexive imagination of career opportunities and a basic understanding of what science is based upon, both in academic or industry fields – and for working on developing young talents eventually.

However, statistics prove that in most of the European countries children, who descend from families without academic background, who have a poor social-economic background, who live in regionally deployed areas, who have a history of migration or who are related to ethnic minorities are least likely to get in touch with the academic world and to go onto higher education at a later

date. On this account, Children's Universities not only address children, but also parents and families by ways of reasonable, but non-binding out-of-school activities which have more of an "event feel" than a solely serious matter of education or "traditional education culture". Consequently, they get the chance to obtain information relating to science education and careers, which they are normally lacking.

2.2.   Recent Developments of Children's Universities

Given the situation as outlined above, there is a strong indication that Children's Universities successfully contribute to a substantial raise of science awareness among children and young people and foster a sustained deconstruction of stereotyped notions. In 2008, Children's Universities can no longer be regarded as isolated phenomena or mere pilot-approaches, as more than 100 universities in Europe had already developed particular programs – and many more were just about to start activities. Consequently, the range of Children's Universities has gone far beyond a critical mass at this time – and this was the major motivation for launching EUCU.NET.

Children's Universities can no longer be deemed as a temporary phenomenon as institutional-ization is proceeding rapidly and more and more universities have demanded external support from other organisers of such events. So, EUCU.NET was intended to support capacity building for developing skills, knowledge and expertise to enable newcomers to perform successfully. In 2008, policy relevance of the Children's University approach has been basically acknowledged by public authorities and funding bodies on local, regional, national or European levels. This may be taken as a proof that the models of Children's Universities is more and more deemed to represent serious concepts of science communication, which go far beyond mere entertainment or "fashionable items" for HE institutions.[1]

Moreover, they are increasingly regarded as suitable measures to bridge the gap between the school system and universities and to smooth transition from one level to another – by preparing for the requirements and the characteristics of university education at the earliest age possible.[2]

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[1] As a tribute to that, the first Children's University in Germany (University of Tübingen) was awarded with the European DESCARTES-Prize for Science Communication by the European Commission in 2005.

[2] In recognition of that, the state government in Rheinland-Pfalz (DE) decided in 2004 to support the implementation of Children's Universities in the entire federal state as a means of fostering co-operation between schools, extra-curricular education and Universities – and there are manifold similar attempts in other countries.

2.3.   Objectives of EUCUNET

The overall strategic objective of EUCUNET is based upon the above-outlined developments of Children's Universities in terms of (public and institutional) policy relevance and of fostering their prevalence. It recognizes that there is a substantial demand for a consolidation of Children's University activities - to provide a sound basis for a reinforcement of existing approaches and a purposeful enhancement of bandwagon effects all over Europe. In doing so, EUCU.NET was intended to contribute to a sustainable raise of scientific awareness among children and young people and would take a considerable share in the overcoming of stereotyped notions of science – especially among children descending from underperforming socio-cultural groups.

Thus, the strategic approach of EUCUNET aimed at strengthening Children's Universities as already well established measures for the benefit of the above-outlined challenges – deriving from intensive activities in the Consortium member states and the organisations involved in EUCUNET – and to carry the Children's University approach beyond current practise and boundaries in a well concerted and professionally assessed manner.

Deduced from this main strategic objective, the operative goals of EUCUNET include:

Identification and inventory of existing Children's Universities in Europe

This will include a detailed description of the respective aims and concepts as well as current activities. All available particulars will be added to a web-based database, which serves as a source of information and summary of best-practise and which will be available in parts for the general public and unrestricted for those experts who seek contacts for further exchange of experience. Consequently, the database serves as the basis for a review of existing concepts and approaches as well as a substantial starting point for Community Building and exchange of experiences - besides the manifold opportunities provided by the features on the Community Web portal dedicated to ease Community Building and interaction as well as by the Mentoring Partnerships.

Identification of contemporary research on Children's Universities and development of monitoring criteria

Based upon the inventory of existing Children's Universities, available research proceedings – either published or "grey literature" – will be identified and compiled systematically. This will provide a basic stock which will be sifted in detail to gain consolidated insight in the impacts and effects arising from the Children's University approach. Revealed research results will be summarized and disseminated to academic and policy audiences and the public – most of all by means of the proposed White Book and in the course of the two scheduled conferences.
Moreover, present lacks in impact analysis will be uncovered and – in consequence of those deficits – monitoring criteria and research focuses will be determined. The latter will serve as a reference to foster concurrent evaluation research on the impact of Children's Universities in the future. They will help to ensure the validity of policy recommendations based on researchers' studies and provide fundamentals to highlight policy relevance – and thus have a quick and identifiable policy impact, besides quality assessment in the narrower sense.

Development of implementation guidance notes

As a result of the review of existing concepts and the sifting of available literature (research reports, impact analyses, didactical evaluation or alike) guidance notes for organisers of Children's Universities will be developed. Special consideration will be given to diversity and gender issues as well as to questions relating to strategies to involve children descending from groups. In all these

regards, experiences gained from practitioners in the course of the project will be taken into account thoroughly. The implementation guidance notes will be of major support for those organisations that intend to pursue Children's Universities activities and will also serve as benchmarking criteria. All in all, implementation guidance notes will promote quality development and will help to obtain added value on a European level.

Initial Conference and European Twin City Conference

To bring together both well experienced providers of Children's Universities and those who are still in a planning phase or even in a process of deliberation, two Conferences will be organised during the project's time span to facilitate exchange of experiences and networking. Moreover, all relevant kinds of stakeholders (policy makers, educational researchers, experts in didactics, scientific journalists, industry, research organisations, universities or alike) will be involved to cover as many as of the relevant fields of interest. Special consideration will be drawn upon fostering of networking between all kinds of involved participants. The Conferences will also be the occasion to present (interim) outcomes of EUCUNET, as well as to receive further input from external experts.

Implementation of an interactive Web Portal

EUCUNET will establish an interactive and collaborative Web portal, which supports Community building, interaction and exchange of experiences best possible. Consequently, a Web2.0-approach will be pursued for those procedures and features, which shall foster involvement of respective keyplayers and practitioners. The core area and the primary module of the Web portal will be represented by an online-database which collects all identified approaches of Children's Universities. The online-database in the narrower sense will be complemented by an arrangement of interactive and adaptive instruments for Community Building, ranging from user generated content (like public personal profiles, weblogs etc.) to discussion boards, networking services, newsletter, RSS-feeds or alike. Altogether, such techniques represent a selection of elements from what is currently discussed as Social Media or Social Network Software widely. However, their implementation shall not end in itself, but support Community Building, exchange of experiences and manifold kinds of cooperation in best ways and to enable a lively community to emerge.

From experience, language barriers hinder networking, establishing of contacts and fruitful cooperation. Consequently, the Web Portal shall also contribute to overcoming language barriers, as in most cases project information on Children's Universities is only available in the respective national language currently.

Establishing and co-ordination of Mentoring Partnerships

EUCUNET will establish a range of 30 Mentoring Partnerships, which are aimed to foster goal-oriented transfer of know-how and which represent made-to-measure cooperation projects within the framework of EUCUNET. Mentoring Partnerships will contribute to a sustained spreading of excellence and to strengthen the idea of Children's Universities by means of cooperation and networking all over Europe, as the basic prerequisite for a partnership is that the mentoring partners come from different countries in order to enable us to build a broad European network.

Preparation of the "White Book on Children's Universities in Europe"

As the major outcome of EUCUNET, a comprehensive White book will be prepared, which not only comprises all outcomes of the project – and thereby illustrates the overall state of the Children's University approach in Europe – but which also serves as a form of reference book for the further

promotion of Children's Universities all over Europe.

These well balanced objectives altogether formed part of a coherent approach to substantially contribute to the reaching of the strategic objective of EUCUNET, which is a sustainable strengthening of the Children's Universities approach as a means of fostering scientific awareness among children and young people and to encourage them to increasingly enter into scientific careers. With a view to the current European situation relating to prevailing images of science and technology and the attitudes on the side of children and young people, this is of outstanding importance.

3. Description of the main S&T results/foregrounds

In March 2000, the EU Heads of States and Governments agreed to make the EU "the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-driven economy by 2010, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion." (European Council, Lisbon, March 2000). In order to achieve this ambitious goal sustainable, when embarking on the Lisbon Strategy, it is not only necessary to ensure a radical transformation of the European economy but also a challenging programme for the modernisation of the education system.

In the meanwhile, the follow-up programme to the Lisbon Strategy was adopted in the form of the "Europe 2020" initiative, but the basic aims are remaining rather similar – which are in principle addressing the advancement of research and technological development, the development of the HE sector and of lifelong learning opportunities to boost growth and employment and – at the same time – the fostering of social integration an cohesion.

As a matter of principle, there is still wide consensus regarding scientific and technological development as fundamental for a competitive Knowledge Society, which more and more depends on scientific discovery and applying this new knowledge through technology. General and specialised scientific or technological knowledge is increasingly called upon in professional and daily life, as is a basic understanding of science and technology. Thus, access to education and training opportunities is an acknowledged precondition for social cohesion and equal access to information and resources, necessary for partaking in a knowledge-based society must help to sustain the European model of society.

In keeping with the initial Lisbon strategy, future objectives of European education systems for the coming years were defined and put into operation – and those are still relevant for Europe 2020.[3] Among the three major objectives of that Objectives report is the particular concern to promote the development of skills for the knowledge society and to facilitate the access to education and training systems for all citizens. By opening the education and training systems "to the world", links between research and society at large shall be fostered. Special consideration is drawn upon children and young people, when it comes to improvement of the education systems:

By overcoming the traditional barriers between formal and non formal learning settings, learning shall be made more attractive – within the formal education systems and outside likewise. The basic approach is to establish an understanding that from an early age, everyone should stay in touch with several education opportunities and to emphasise that families or local communities must play an important role too – as well as the education systems must introduce new ways of collaboration and complementary enhancement among the respective educational institutions.

But one of the major objectives laid down in the Objectives report[4] is the claim for more recruitment to the scientific and technical disciplines, to encourage children and young people to take a greater interest in science and technology at large and to increase the numbers of children and young people finally choosing studies and careers in the field of science and technology likewise (either academic or non-academic).

Based on the initial Lisbon strategy, the enormous relevancy of that issue was emphasized, where it is recommended to "make teaching methods more effective and attractive" (amongst others, by

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[3] "The concrete future objectives of education systems", COM (2001) 59 final, 31.01.2001; "Draft Detailed Work Programme for the follow-up of the Report on the Concrete Objectives of Education and Training Systems", COM(2001)501 final, 07.09.2001
[4] ibid.

combining classroom-based teaching with extra-curricular activities) and to "strongly support partnerships between schools, universities, research institutions, enterprises, parents and other players at all levels", both to improve the quality and attractiveness of teaching and to effectively prepare young people for working life and active citizenship, occasionally with a view to concrete (or even still vague, but emerging) career prospects in science and technology.

Hence, there is both the chance and the need for Universities to re-position themselves and to open themselves towards new challenges and unusual target audiences. The overall aims and goals of EUCU.Net were well deriving from the abovementioned scenarios and were supported by the following successful activities and results:

3.1. An interactive Web Portal for Community Building among Children's Universities

EUCU.NET has set up a functional community webportal to support networking among organisers of Children's Universities and to make key data about associated projects accessible for a wider public.

It became obvious in the time period before 2008, that there is a rapidly increasing prevalence of the Children's University approach and a massive interest by the media, by educationalists or by policy makers – on the other hand there was a massive lack of information about Children's Universities on a broad basis, no synopsis of activities, particular models or results and barely an exchange of experience beyond local levels. However, the sharing of know-how about how to overcome the various obstacles and challenges which universities are faced with when starting to engage with children and young people at an institutional level is deemed to be crucial for pushing forward the spreading of the entire approach and to impact on quality development.

Moreover, organisers of Children's Universities were increasingly requested to underpin the relevance of this project idea, either by potential funding organisations or by their university managers. Consequently, it was intended as a substantial support for those keyplayers and innovators to provide them with arguments and data which prove that Children's University is no longer an isolated phenomenon, but that there is a widespread interest and successful reference models by a larger number of other universities.

Taking this into consideration, the EUCU.NET webportal has was both implemented and designed to serve both as a source of information for all interested parties – may they be either Children's University practitioners or not – and as a meeting place to share personal contacts, news, experiences and specific information. Consequently, registered members have the chance to edit and make available personal data as well as key characteristics of their Children's University project. Access to this data is depending on a member status, as selected information is limited to them. However, basic project information and address data is available to the general public and allows interested parties to make contacts and get an overview.

Furthermore, registered members have several opportunities for networking and communication – for example by ways of blog entries, file upload, participation in a moderated forum or contributions to the regular newsletter. Site language is limited to English – so all contributors are

requested to translate relevant information from their national languages. This may be deemed a matter of course nowadays in a global world – but in fact information about local activities in only available in mother tongues in many cases. In this sense, the EUCU.NET webportal is a successful attempt to support networking and exchange beyond the boundaries of language, regions and countries.

Currently, almost 140 associated projects and institutions are represented at the EUCU.NET, involving three times as many individuals as experts, practitioners and academics.

At the same time as the webportal, the unique graphical appearance of EUCU.NET has been developed – which gives the entire approach and all network activities and deliverables incl. , folders, stationary, posters etc. a distinctive look and feel. All this results in the official EUCU.NET membership logo, which is restricted to members if they commit themselves to some core principles and to a common understanding of Children's Universities' characteristics.

It is important to say that the membership logo is not awarded as a result of a supposed top-down auditing process – as it is not the intention of EUCU.NET to promote a one-model-fits-all standard. With respect to regional or national requirements and conditions, as well as to institutional aims and feasibility, Children's University models may differ in practise – but there needs to be a shared (and sometimes maybe idealistic) perception as of the relations between science and society, the value of higher education and universal knowledge as well as and the importance of equal access and awareness raising at the earliest age possible – irrespective of gender, family of origin, cultural background or school achievements.

Consequently, there is a continuing autonomy of Children's Universities under the EUCU.NET umbrella – but sharing the same basic visions forms a community of "critical friends" under the EUCU.NET logo, which stands as a hallmark for all EUCU.NET activities in the meanwhile.

3.2. Identification and inventory of existing Children's Universities

For the very first time, EUCU.NET has conducted an area-wide comprehensive review of European Children's Universities which provides an overview and comparability of individual Children's University activities. All received key data about Children's University projects was integrated in a web-based database, which serves as a source of information and summary of best-practice: The data is available in parts for the general public and of unrestricted availability for those experts who seek contacts for further exchange of experience. Consequently, the database has two main purposes: It serves as the basis for the review of existing concepts and approaches on the one hand; at the same time it provides a conducive starting point for establishing contacts and initiate community building.

Besides community building, the narrower aim of the inventory was to compile a database for further exploitation and analysis of Children's Universities from all over Europe – to learn more about their implementation, activities and concepts by evaluating the information and data given by their organizers areas in a Delphi method-like approach. Analysis of this data was carried out according to pre-defined categories and areas of interest (incl. amongst others, an attempt of a "typology" of Children's Universities as well as aspects of gender and age).

The more and more Children's Universities joined the community, the broader the pool of contacts got to share experiences within participation in conferences, online activities, participation in the

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Mentoring Partnership programme etc. - and the more project data was available for getting an insight in typical models and characteristics.

Characteristics were deduced from the following areas of interest, which were objictified by means of standardized step-by-step online data sheets:

- Institutional details
- Offers and activities
- Participants and target groups
- Lecturers and staff
- Lecturer support
- Administration and cooperation
- Concept and documentation
- Planning and implementation
- Participation
- Gender aspects

Eventually, not all of this information was taken into account for the first analysis, but for the sake of completeness (as this information also formed part of the project profiles available on the Web Portal, provided that the account holders agreed/decided to set the respective items as "public") and as a database for any future analysis, it was collected in this comprehensive way.

The Europe-wide roll-out of the survey in several waves was accomplished in late 2008 and – irrespective of the definite participation and the inclusion of received response in the analysis eventually – it attracted massive awareness among key players who are active in the science communication field and thereby supported the promotion of EUCU.NET and a wide dissemination of the basic idea of the Children's University approach, which – going beyond the initial purpose of the survey - led to other (joint) activities in the field of science communication for children and young people.

In fact, there is a wide range of activities which are aimed to address children and young people with the spirit of science and research, which by be designed and managed by various types of institutions, which may have diverse motivation behind them, which may be saleable products or non-profit initiatives – and all of them may be characterized by better or worst standards of delivery, irrespective if they would be named a Children's University or not.

Consequently, it was required to define more in detail what the actual characteristics of a "Children's University" are determined by. Basically, it was intended to achieve this by ways of a typification based on the received data. However, it became obvious that that this would not give sufficient consideration to the wide variety of particular models and the specific institutional conditions but - in return – might have excluded other models due to their island position. Due to widespread range of concepts, traditions, levels of institutionalization, organizations involved and alike, least common characteristics for particular sub-groups were hard to define reasonably and significantly.

The EUCU.NET Charter

Rather than identifying and sorting Children's Universities by exclusive typology, it was decided to pursue a more generic approach and to develop the EUCU.NET Charter – based on valuable contributions from community members and advisors. The charter is intended to define the nature of a Children's University by a set of well determined criteria, which is constitutional for the idea of Children's Universities and which – rather than a list of prototyped models of Children's Universities could have allowed for – can serve as a means of self-assessment and self-commitment. In this regard, the EUCU.NET Charter represents an instrument of securing quality standards and of classification, as well as it constitutes a policy statement as concerns the overall aims and goals of the Children's University approach.
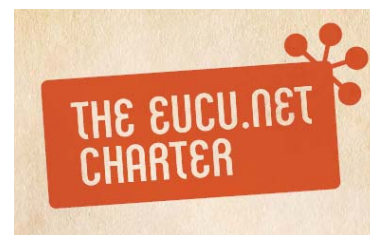
The Charter was based on characteristics of Children's Universities as initially submitted with key data about ongoing Children's University activities, but was then refined, modified and paraphrased in the form of a declaration. It was thoroughly deliberated within the EUCU.NET Scientific Board and put up for discussion within the entire EUCU.NET community. The final version was approved and launched officially by the EUCU.NET consortium.[5]

Selected findings

Eventually, all those Children's Universities were taken into account for a synopsis, which comply with the principles as laid down in the EUCU.NET Charter. For example, mere commercial activities which would be named a Children's University or similar, but which would have not links to academic institutions at all - as a quality indicator for research-based science communication – would be excluded from analysis and would not be deemed as relevant partners within the EUCU.NET community based on the Charter.

In brief, the synopsis of the various Children's University models uncovered quite some noticeable characteristics and trends:[6]

Although Children's Universities are offered in a huge variety, a considerable part of the Children's Universities registered have a scientific or academic reference, mainly shown by the institutions which initiated a Children's University project, by the location where the Children's Universities' administration takes place, by the lecturers' professional backgrounds and by the venues of Children's Universities. Furthermore, the delivery models and the particular didactical models based on lectures and seminars are references for an academic context. Reflected by the fact that Children's University activities tend to take place in regular series and to be subdivided in semesters (if not being specific summer programs as in some cases), they seem to be imitating typical university life and culture to a large extent, accompanied by other forms of academic routines and symbols – and thereby provide in insight into the academic world, especially for those children and their families who would most likely not have the intention or the choice to go onto higher education.

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[5] The Charter is available under http://eucu.net/resources/about/the-eucu.net-charter

[6] First results were presented at the Initial EUCU.NET Conference ("*Children's Universities – The Idea captures Europe*", Feb 13th and 14th, 2009 -Tübingen, DE - see: "*The Data Base of European Children's Universities*" under http://eucu.net/events/conferences/tuebingen

In doing so, Children's Universities demand a change on side of the hosting universities, as those groups constitute totally non-traditional target groups – notably in terms of age, but even more important in terms of habitus, experience and everyday life. Consequently, Children's Universities are calling for – and thereby initiating - a necessary institutional change, required to be successful in engaging with this target group. And this change goes far beyond the time span of project activities, as there is an observed impact e.g. on teaching habits, as many academics are reporting back that the gained unexpected suggestions and immediate feedback from children on how to make their very complex fields of research more understandable and traceable – and as soon as they are able to get those subjects across to children, they are able to do it for almost everybody else – and this is the central idea of science communication and of the science in society vision at large.

Consequently, the organizers of Children's Universities declared prevalently, that the overall aims and goals of their projects are to "communicate science" and at the same time to "widen perspectives" of children and their families regarding any kind of participation in science and research or higher education at a later date.

Surprisingly, the least number of executing organization of Children's Universities declared in the survey, that their activities are based on elaborated, transferable concepts – it seems such projects are rather based on intrinsic development and that day-to-day management is of prior relevance than sustainable documentation. Moreover, a substantial lack of publishable reports or accompanying evaluation on the outcomes has been revealed clearly in the survey. The reason is obvious, as many of such projects can not fall back on capacious infrastructure;

even at larger universities they are sometimes initiatives set and carried out by single persons, with the support of a limited number of helpers and without substantial budget. In return, they are facing a massive demand on the side of participants, their families and the public – consequently, the focus might be more on daily management than on documentation and evaluation. And this is notably true as most of the projects are lacking sufficient expertise to conduct such accompanying research in-house. In fact there are many cases, concept papers, monitoring reports, guidelines and alike are compiled for internal use only (with respect to workload and available resources), but not in way which is initially intended or subsequently deemed to be appropriate for external dissemination. This could be one of the key factors why evaluations and written documentations are very rare.
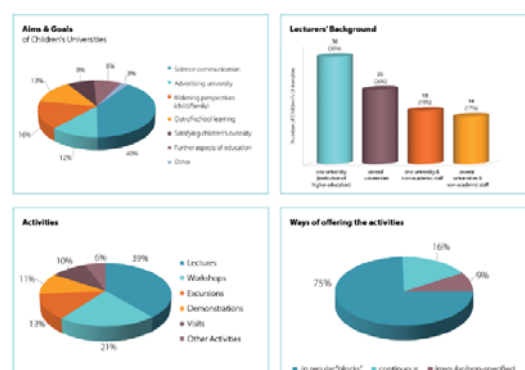
Last but not least, the survey also brought about the some indication of expectations of respondents on EUCU.NET as a community of practitioners and experts: exchanging experiences, networking in its literal meaning and inspiring each other appear to be the main issues of concern. Eventually, this response shows the need of a network like EUCU.NET within Europe and it proves its importance and relevance.

3.3. Identification of existing reports, analyses and evaluation reports

Going even beyond the findings of the inventory and the survey among Children's University organisers, EUCU.NET conducted an in-depth literature review on Children's University - may this include either published or "grey literature", evaluation reports, monographs, conference papers or any other relevant piece of literature that help to determine to which extent the scientific community has dealt with the approach and the outcomes of Children's Universities so far.

The literature review should provide consolidated insight, should increase the knowledge about the impact and effects of the Children's University approach and provide arguments and evidence which might be picked up by organizers when vindication of the relevance and the sustainability of this approach is needed vis-à-vis funding authorities, university managers or academics as teachers to-be. At the same time, the review was intended to reflect the current state of scientific debate – and to encourage more educationalists, sociologist, economists, science philosophers and other disciplines that indeed Children's University is a relevant field of evaluation and research.

It must be admitted that this attempt has failed with regard to the intended exploitation of the review results.

A thorough literature search was conducted by the University of Basel (CH), which included conventional and online databases, various kinds of scientific journals as well as the references made by organisers of Children's in the course of the project inventory (see above).

All in all, a total of more than 130 elementary units of analysis were identified. However, this number not only includes scientific publications from various fields of scientific interests, but also more journalistic articles and other dissemination documents. Due to this widespread range of publications, they were clustered and classified as academic, journalistic or child-addressed publications and were analysed with respect to their nature.

Of major interest were academic publications – study reports, monographs, reference books and anthologies, as well as journals, professional articles and presentations. They were sifted through as concerns their relevance for issues of motives and objectives on the side of organizers, the role of CUs as a means of public relations (PR) and communication, evaluation of target audience, typical concepts and programs of Children's Universities, satisfaction and (short-, medium- and long-term) effects on the side of participants and their families, modifications and variations of the CU approach (related programs, eg. for other age groups) and, all in all, critical reflections on the Children's University concept all in all.

Besides singe conclusions, which may be relevant as concerns their specific interest, it must be maintained that, all in all, the extent and depth of scientific research is rather poor and only a very limited number of scientific publications could be identified.

Presumably, this may be due to the fact that Children's University is a rather new phenomenon, which has not yet sparked substantial interest within the scientific community. The report reveals that engaging in theoretical reflections on Children's Universities is only fragmented and that it seems to be reserved for students and their qualification papers. Long-term studies concerning the above issues have not yet been conducted, as well as the availability of critical articles was most notably lacking in the context of the inventory. Furthermore, considerations based on development-psychological theory or theories of learning and education are mentioned sporadically, but are largely missing.

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As the major result of the literature analysis, there are no specific lacks in research which were identified with a view to the above mentioned issues, but there is a general lack of accompanying research all in all. All these aspects need to be analysed and dealt with in greater detail within future evaluation and research on the side of the scientific community.

Furthermore, it may be deemed as a relevant finding that most of the literature was identified as in German language, even though the investigation was supported by all EUCU.NET beneficiaries in 17 European languages. Obviously, this is due to the fact that Children's Universities were a phenomenon predominantly in the German speaking countries in the beginning. It may be assumed that the range of scientific research in other countries will increase at the same time as the expansion of Children's Universities increasingly spreads all over Europe - and that there is a certain time interval before the scientific community perceives a particular phenomenon (as Children's Universities are, in fact) as a relevant field of research.

EUCU.NET has prepared a "*Bibliography of literature on Children's Universities*" as a comprehensive report covering all findings and conclusions in due form, which is available on request. Moreover, a short version was included in the web portal as a reference, which allows for continuation and annotation and which may serve as a growing database of current publications (http://eucu.net/resources/bibliography).

3.4. The EUCU.NET Conferences

EUCU.NET is aiming to make Children's Universities more visible as a serious approach of raising awareness as for science, research and higher education in an academic context from the earliest age possible and to underpin the relevance with a view to the Grand Challenges which Europe is faced with – by forming an active network of committed people who are active in this field as experts and practitioners. This has not only contributed to cooperation, capacity building and to demonstrate that a critical mass of successful project activities has yet been achieved – but also to making information about the Children's university approach more accessible.

Consequently, EUCU.NET has arranged a series of two major conferences and other networking events to contribute to the above-mentioned aims. Both conferences were aimed to bring together well experienced organizers of Children's Universities with those who are still in a planning phase or even in a process of consideration. They facilitated the exchange of experiences and start-kicked networking activities. All relevant kinds of stakeholders (policy makers, educational researchers, experts in didactics, scientific journalists, research organizations, universities or alike) were involved to cover as many of the relevant fields of interest. Moreover, both conferences were used as an occasion to present (interim) outcomes of EUCU.NET, as well as to receive further input from external experts.

"*Children's Universities – The Idea captures Europe*", **Feb 13th-14th 2009 - Tübingen, DE**

This very first international Conference on Children's Universities was successfully held at the University of Tübingen in early 2009.

It was officially opened by EU Commissioner Janez Potočnik, responsible for Science and Research at that time. In his committed video message he clearly emphasized the significance and the importance which the EUCU.NET project is accredited with by the European Commission. Almost 120 registered experts and practitioners from 18 European countries (and beyond) joined the event. Besides keynote lectures and a series of parallel workshops, the conference has provided extensive room for bilateral talks were offered, such as the Open Café, message boards, poster exhibition and the "Mentoring Booth" - which was specifically offered as a partner market to get in touch with potential cooperation projects within the Mentoring Progamme (see below).

The conference has well proven its ability to foster networking and to stark-kick new forms of cooperation and exchange, both on formal and informal levels: Numerous informal contacts were established, both on an international and individual levels. Moreover, in many cases personal contacts were made between people even from the same country. As a consequence, impulses for the further implementation of the EUCU.NET workplan during the funding period were gained, as well as for the future of the growing network itself and for individual Children's Universities' developments. Due to the high degree of internationality among the participants it was facilitated that the idea of Children's University as well as of EUCU.NET itself was spread all over Europe – and this was well revealed by spontaneous and mid-term feedback received from participants.

Moreover, the Initial Conference was highly acclaimed by the Minister for Science and Research of the state of Baden-Württemberg, Peter Frankenberg, when he commented the role of Children's Universities as an appropriate and target-oriented instrument to motivate underprivileged children

to go onto higher education and study at a university later on. In this regard, he specifically highlighted the role of EUCU.NET in a particular press release via the German press agency ddp.

The conference documentation including all programme details, presentations, information material etc. is published on the EUCU.NET web portal under http://eucu.net/events/conferences/

"*EUCU.NET Twin City Conference: Beyond the Boundaries*", Dec. 6th-9th 2009 - Bratislava/SK and Vienna/AT

To highlight the European relevance of the Children's University model, EUCU.NET has organised a conference on 2 international locations (Bratislava and Vienna) in late 2009, which was intended to support the establishing of a sustainable network beyond the project's lifespan, based upon the result which were achieved at that time.

To highlight relevant dimensions in the relationship between science and the arts, which come along with many facets and which bring about many examples of co-development, it was decided to arrange the Slovak part of the TCC at a theater, namely the Arena Theater in Bratislava which is the venue of the Bratislava Children's University ("*Detská univerzita Komenského*") in cooperation with the Comenius University.

The title "*Twin City Conference – Beyond the boundaries*" shall indicate that the conference goes "beyond boundaries" from various perspectives, as Children's Universities do – beyond the boundaries of language and nation, beyond the traditional mission of a university and – particularly relevant for the TCC – beyond the lifespan of EUCU.NET as a funded project. Consequently, it was decided during preparatory discussions that the TCC will – amongst the other key aspects – most notably be used for paving the way for a sustainable membership organization after the project's lifespan.

The conference programme was composed in a way to reveal the fast progress of the EUCU.NET activities and to bring together organizers of Children's Universities and other interested individuals. This included stakeholders like policy makers, journalists, researchers, teachers and students. Emphasis was put on the inclusion of general results of the Mentoring Partnership Programme and an active involvement of the participants. Generally the conference highlighted the advantages of a membership in the European Children's Universities Network and the progress that has been made during its two years of existence – by presenting all major outcomes of the EUCU.NET project which were achieved since the beginning.

Abundant room for discussion, exchange and active participation was given in workshops. The conference's days were intended for fostering the dialogue between various types of organisations, to again further models of best practise and to stimulating innovative forms of co-operation and communication. For sharing ideas and information, there were opportunities throughout the symposium to gather in small groups. The European Twin City Conference was a place for networking and for deepening the relationships between Children's Universities providers – based on previous results of the EUCU.NET project.

The conference which involved 121 participants from 25 countries was opened by EU-Commissioner Maroš Ševcovic responsible for Education, Training, Culture and Youth. In his

opening speech, he underpinned the approval and the recognition of the Children's Universities' relevance from the side of the European Commission. He highlighted the importance of initiatives like the Children's Universities and his support for the whole network, cf. his contribution to the EUCU.NET White Book.

Feedback of the conference participants attested a professional and flawless organization and that the initial aims were fully achieved. All in all, the participants gave a clear statement for a continuation of the European Children's Universities Network because of the high level quality of the project coordination and the supreme importance for organizers to meet up and share their information during the two EUCU.NET conferences.

A comprehensive documentation of the conference is available under
http://eucu.net/events/conference/twin-city

3.5. Development of monitoring criteria

Based on the experiences gained from the literature review (see above), on intensive discussion within the EUCU.NET community and supported by valuable input from the side of the Scientific Advisory Board a framework for analysis and monitoring of ongoing Children's University activities was established. This framework shall serve as a guideline and as aid to orientation for organisers of Children's Universities to determine useful and concurrent starting points for evaluation of their individual projects on location. The framework thereby represents a set of quality criteria that shall be taken into account by CU organizers to foster quality development and comparability of project outcomes.

During the time span of the EUCU.NET project, the framework was developed and refined continuously - based on a presentation of the first version at the Initial Conference, which put even more momentum in the development of an analysis framework. Consequently, particular monitoring levels were integrated, namely "*direct feedback*", "*(self-)evaluation*" and "*open research*" and prepared in a user-friendly distributable checklist-based format.

Eventually, possible field of application were presented to the plenary assembly within the TwinCity Conference and "*Research, evaluation and models of CUs*" were discussed as a key issue. Based on this analysis grid, Scientific Board member Hans-Ulrich Grunder has derived and presented an innovative pedagogical research scenario.

The final results are both available on the EUCU.NET web portal and in the White Book and they represent a valuable resource for CU organizers, but also for researchers from various fields.

## 3.6. Development of implementation guidance notes

Learning from others' experience is always better than from own adversity, and this is notably true if there are reference models of good practice and active community which a serve as a source of know-how and orientation. Based on active cooperation and exchange – both on formal and informal levels – EUCU.NET has triggered a substantial flow of information, especially from well

experienced organisers to those who are yet considering the implementation of a Children's University-like project.

Fragmented and widespread knowledge that comes with experience was collected within the EUCU.NET community and accompanied with results of the project inventory as well as the literature review. Valuable input was received from members of the Advisory Board. Special consideration was given to diversity and gender issues as well as questions relating to strategies as to involve children descending from underperforming and disadvantaged groups. Best practice examples were analysed and experiences gained from practitioners in the course of the project will be taken into account thoroughly.

The result is a set of recommendations, remarks and proposals which may be of major support for those organisers who intend to engage with children and young people in a science communication context. They may also serve as benchmarking criteria for the comparison of already existing approaches and as codes of practice. All in all, the implementation guidance notes can support the further institutionalisation and spreading of Children's Universities best possible, can contribute to the promotion of quality development and can help to obtain added value on a European level.

Within the time span of the EUCU.NET project, these recommendations were modified, updated and enriched repeatedly, whereas the conferences and the Mentoring programme were a relevant opportunities for revision. However, the endeavor to develop an all-in-one implementation guidance package had to be redefined and more flexible, modular and scalable guidelines were developed. The result is now a comprehensive collection of possible demands on Children's University organizers and recommendations how to meet these requirements. Particular attention was drawn on didactical issues as well as on aspects of gender and age groups, which were also reviewed in the course of professional training workshops at the conferences.
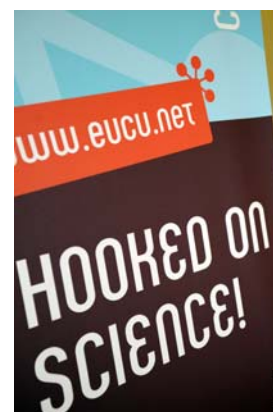
However, for the more experienced key players questions of logistics and organisational matters are becoming less momentous and questions of institutional change and the effects which Children's Universities have on the hosting universities come to the fore. As one consequence, a new debate was opened – also promoted by a keynote lecture held by Prof. Ada Pellert, who is a university manager and organizational researcher, at the TwinCity Conference: "*Children's Universities: An incubator for institutional change in Higher Education*" has added additional momentum to the reflection of the role which universities have in the science an society agenda. Eventually, this has pushed forward the decision to propose a new project to the European Commission – where many of the EUCU.NET associates had a share and a role in. (see below under: "*4. Potential impact*")

In addition to this, one of the most relevant findings when compiling the guidance notes was a recognizable lack of well defined political and strategic concepts behind particular Children's University projects – and the entire approach. As EUCU.NET has more and more taken over the role as an umbrella lobbying organization for the concerns of university-based science in society activities for children and young people, initiatives were set to enhance the policy profile of Children's Universities and to make a committed gesture about their social responsibility. Consequently, EUCU.NET has agreed upon and issued a "*Declaration on Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion*" as a contribution the EY2010 – and this was intended as the starting point for a

series of declarations to be adopted and disseminated to underpin the relevance of Children's Universities.[7] (see also below under "*The EUCU.NET Mentoring Partnerships*")

3.7. The EUCU.NET Mentoring Partnerships

Within the scopes of EUCU.NET a broad range of Mentoring Partnerships was established as made-to-measure cooperation projects. The programme was also aiming to contribute to a sustained spreading of excellence and to the strengthening of the idea of Children's Universities by means of cooperation and networking all over Europe. This should be achieved by ways of fostering a targeted transfer of know-how - ranging from aspects of the strategic embedding and development or refinement of CU models in face of the local or national conditions and the institutional environment to day-to-day management of planning and running a CU, including consideration of specific issues as age or gender of the target group.

To achieve the broadest appeal possible, the basic prerequisite for forming a partnership under the EUCU.NET Mentoring programme was that the partners must come from different countries in order to enable the enhancement of a widespread network. Moreover, they should represent either different models or "cultures" of CUs or different stages of implementations if focusing on the same model.

Mentees and mentors should benefit from new impulses to start Children's University projects, from integration in existing networks, from judgment of own abilities, from ideas for future developments of CU projects, from insights into other approaches as concerns chances for optimizing the own projects as for efficiency and reflection and from an evaluation of own projects by "critical friends".

All in all, the Mentoring programme was designed in a way to achieve a major impact of on personal levels – making organisers to meet and to talk to each other shall be the key to sustainable networking and to push forward the idea of Children's Universities, to foster the implementation of new projects and to contribute to quality development – supported by meeting opportunities, webspace, guidlelines etc. provided by EUCU.NET, together with a limited amount of financial resources to help covering travel and accommodation expenses for mutual visits at the project venues.

During the EUCU.NET time span, a total of 14 Mentoring Partnerships have been established after approval of the applications by the EUCU.NET Management Board, which were formed by organisations from 14 different countries. Applications needed to include a detailed workplan, a cost projection and a description of goals which were intended to be achieved.

To add even more specific value to the Mentoring programme, it was decided to open up the programme also to more diversified forms of bilateral cooperation and exchange in the form of "Extended Partnerships", which were in line with the overriding aims of the Mentoring programme, but of shorter duration and of less formal requirements. The specific focus of those "Extended Partnerships" was put on initiating links between awareness raising approaches in the UK and in Continental-Europe and to explore different models of working with children young people, their families, schools and communities in a European context - with a particular focus on raising aspirations for young people currently unlikely to progress to higher education. This was due to the intention that there is a decade-long tradition of widening participation activities for children and young people at UK universities, which are rarely perceived in Europe, whereas – in return –

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[7] The text of this declaration is available under http://eucu.net/resources/documents

the continental approach of Children's Universities is almost unknown in the UK, at least under this term. In doing so, it was also possible to carry the network even further, to secure a maximum of knowledge transfer and to involve more key persons from different countries by ways of two major networking events (in Liverpool, Sept. 2009 and in Brussels, Feb. 2010) and active cooperation between those events.

The Extended partnerships meeting in Brussels was also dedicated to develop a strategic programme of emphasis for Children's Universities according to the European Year 2010 for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion (EY2010). This meeting was also facilitated by a representative of the European Commission - Task Force EY2010. Based on this expertise, a declaration was formulated, adopted and presented to EU-Commissioner Maroš Ševcovic, responsible for Education, Training, Culture and Youth at that time.[8]

All in all, a total of 43 partner insitutions from 21 different countries have participated in the EUCU.NET Mentoring programme. The most relevant outcome was based on chance to understand other projects at first hand by getting the possibility of connecting people by way of study visits. Moreover, key issues were identified with regard to initiating, establishing and completing a Children's University project successfully – and most of them were relating to aspects of management and of didactics. Basically, there are no "one size fits all" recipes for the running of a Children's University and there will not be a single best practice model because of the diverse conditions of organisational backgrounds or the different countries and cities. Nonetheless EUCU.NET tried to outline some basic prerequisites to support a successful initiation phase of a Children's University project. (see above: "*Implementation Guidance Notes*")

Moreover, the Mentoring programme also revealed the lack of a sorely needed theoretical discussion – and underpinned in step with actual practice what has already been accessed during the inventory, the review of concepts and the literature review. To take this deficit into account, a EUCU.NET internet forum was set up - where members can discuss, explore and exchange sources of expertise. However, the Mentoring programme has successfully turned out as an incubator for the enhancement of the Children's Universities' concepts.

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[8] The text of the "*EUCU.NET Declaration on Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion*" is available under
http://eucu.net/resources/documents

3.8. The EUCU.NET Whitebook – A Reference Guide on Children's Universities

The EUCU.NET White Book comprises all outputs of the project and illustrates the overall state of the of Children's University approach in Europe. The White Book serves as reference book for the further promotion of Children's Universities. Consequently, it is not only part of the EUCU.NET dissemination strategy, but also a contribution to the sustainability of the whole project beyond its life span as an EU funded project.
It has been distributed to a wide range of key players and stakeholders on regional, national and European levels, among the EUCU.NET associates and Mentoring partners as well as an additional target audience as researchers, academics but even parents and families.

Free copies of the EUCU.NET White Book can be ordered via the order form on www.eucu.net.

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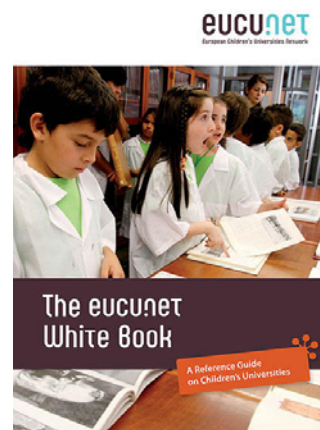
4. Potential impact

After the two years funding period, EUCU.NET is now well established and acknowledged as the umbrella organisation for Children's Universities in Europe – and even beyond, as it is increasingly being well connected with relevant stakeholding organizations from all over the world. The European Access Network (EAN), the UNESCO, the European University Association (EUA), the European Students' Union (ESU), the Network of Universities from the Capitals of Europe (UNICA), the Egyptian National Scientific and Technical Information Network (ENSTINET) or the Manthan Educational Programme Society in India are just some of those contacts.

This broad basis of strategic partners proves that the Children's Universities approach has gone far beyond just being considered a "fashionable item" for universities, but rather that it is being acknowledged a sustainable and serious long-term approach with the aim to impact on the future student population in Europe and to initiate a dialogue between science and society from the earliest age possible.

After Children's Universities have shown a massive emerging at universities in many European countries (possibly not under this particular term) even before EUCU.NET was launched as a project, one of the major impacts of EUCU.NET was to underpin the relevance of the approach beyond regional levels – by giving it a distinctive name, a recognisable label, a consistent appearance and reliable faces in the spotlight. In doing so, it became obvious for potentially interested parties, that initiators of Childen's University-like projects are not just visionary lone-players, but that there is larger movement behind this approach.

However, this acknowledgement hasn't not just come from publicity effects; much rather is is based on the outcomes, deliverables and activities while the funding period of EUCU.NET: the inventory and reviews to make Children's Universities more visible, the developing of guidelines and supporting material to impact on quality development, the introduction of sustained research and evaluation methods to make Children's Universities' effects more traceable and the Mentoring programme, the networking activities and the conferences to get more people involved had the major share in this success eventually.

Consequently, the overall impact of EUCU.NET was achieved by lobbying for the idea of Children's Universities and kicking-off new projects in European countries, fostering scientific debate, contributing to quality development and making the impact and the relevance of Children's University more traceable and transparent for vindication vis-à-vis funding authorities, university managers or academics as teachers to-be.

However, EUCU.NET nowadays is more and more given the role to also highlight the policy relevance of the experiences gained from such projects within the scopes of the European education systems and the Grand Challenges which Europe in increasingly being faced with (as issues of social change, migration, need for more talents etc. are), and this also includes a need for innovation in education and science teaching. In reflecting this role, aspects of awareness raising, equal access to higher education and promotion of educational opportunities became increasingly relevant while running EUCU.NET as a project.
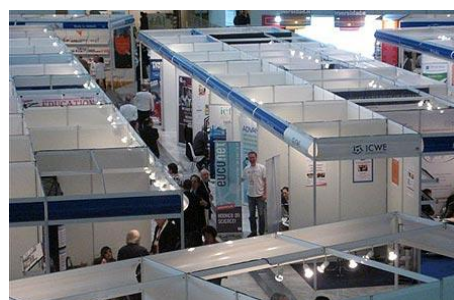
4.1. Levels of impact

As outlined in the relating chapter (see: "*2.3. Objectives of EUCUNET*"), the objectives of EUCU.NET were targeting various levels with the aim to to carry the Children's University approach beyond current practice and boundaries in a well concerted and professionally assessed manner:

- Spreading excellence by means of networking and community building
- Intensification of knowledge transfer and exchange of experience at a European level,
- between existing providers of Children's Universities (benchmarking) and
- in support of further Universities as prospective providers (capacity building)
- based upon definition of quality standards and quality development procedures (codes of
- practice)
- to improve effects and secure attainment of expected overall impact
- to make Children's Universities more visible as an essential strategic instrument of innovation in education,
- by policy directed networking and by development of capacity to conduct policy-relevant definition of standards, guidelines and monitoring criteria,
- which impact upon policy debates and which facilitate a mutually beneficial exchange of information between providers and policy-makers
- and which support the development of a sustained evaluation research agenda.

More in detail, EUCU.NET has achieved impact on various levels based on these objectives.

Impact on policy level

As a matter of fact, policy must be considered as much wider terms in this regard than in its narrowest definition as being solely about what governments do, or choose not to do. Far beyond that, non-governmental institutions and organisations contribute to, and participate in, the creation and monitoring of approaches, principles and structures that inform and govern education policy and practise. In so doing, they are makers of public policy, too - and inevitable contributors for gaining added value on a European level.

However, policy making is a process and not a definite status – and this process is taking time, is full of uncertainties and complex, as well as it depending on national or regional traditions, "cultures" and requirements. But indeed it also depending on current ideas and trends – and taking this into account, it may be taken as much more than a token of appreciation, that two European Commissioners decided to participate in and contribute to EUCU.NET events, namely EU-Commissioner Janez Potočnik (responsible for Science and Research at the time of his contribution) and EU-Commissioner Maroš Ševcovic (responsible for Education, Training, Culture and Youth at that time).

Moreover, policy makers as well as public officials from many European countries have had a role and participated in networking activities. Two years of project activities for sure is too short to reasonably measure any particular impact on policy levels, but – besides personal involvements and commitment nowadays – it is plausible to presume that there will be a concrete influence in the near future. And this is even more conceivable with respect to institutional policy: More and more university managers have got in touch with the idea of Children's University within EUCU.NET events and networking activities – and this may well have an impact on the development and the spreading of this approach.

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Poland may be taken as an example, where merely a handful of Children's Universities were identified before the launch of EUCU.NET, nowadays - after outstandingly active participation of Polish flagship projects within EUCU.NET - summing up to more than 60 locations – and many of them being associated with the EUCU.NET network. This may be taken as a proof of the successful incubator function which EUCU.Net has had in several countries and regions.[9]

Also Spain serves as an example of good practice, when the Catalan Association of Public Universities decided to launch an area-wide Children's University program at all public universities with support from the Catalan Government.[10]

Moreover, the Egyptian National Scientific and Technical Information Network (ENSTINET) decided – after extensive consultation with EUCU.NET, its representatives and the EUCU.NET advisory board – to initiate a nation-wide Children's University program in Egypt to support the national socioeconomic development strategy of Egypt[11] - and the same is true for Turkey, where after involvement of key persons and stakeholders in EUCU.NET, showcase projects were established which added notable momentum to the further spreading of the approach in Turkey.[12]

The same applies to Austria, where the Federal Ministry for Science and Research has launched a nation-wide funding program for Children's Universities and has awarded the Sustainability Award 2008 for Regional Integration to the Vienna Children's University – and there are even more examples of positive impact on policy making and on institutional development of organization, which have been in close contact with EUCU.NET and its associates.[13]

Impact on organisational levels

EUCU.NET was intended to support institutions which propose to set off Children's University-like activities in overcoming observable lacks in experience and know and to evoke added value on European levels to a highest degree. In this regards, well designed measures were adopted to intensify networking and community building, as well as to support quality development and monitoring procedures by means of benchmarking among well established providers. This for example includes the implementation guidance notes which were developed within EUCU.NET, the EUCU.NET charter or the framework for evaluation and research (see above under: "*2.3. Objectives of EUCUNET*").

In doing so, EUCUNET provided targeted mechanisms and procedures to derive benefit from existing knowledge and know how efficiently as an important starting point to build up capacities on organisational levels and to – in return - carry the approach of Children's Universities' further. Before the launch of EUCU.NET, Children's Universities were frequently based on ad-hoc development and inherent routines on the side of locally defined project parameters – which may well fit the tradition of universities as centuries-old science organization, but which may be obsolete to a certain extend when the aim is to engage with a non-traditional target group, as children and young people in fact are for a university.

For the sake of completeness, it must be admitted that even though guidelines, criteria for mentoring, analysis grids etc. were developed thoroughly and based on manifold input from

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[9] for references see: http://www.uniwersytet-dzieciecy.pl/

[10] See http://www.acup.cat/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=297&lang=en

[11] http://www.sti.sci.eg/history.htm

[12] http://www.cocukuniversitesi.ankara.edu.tr/

[13] http://bmwf.gv.at/nc/startseite/forschung/national/nachhaltigkeit/sustainability_award_2008/?sword_list[0]=kinderuni

various experienced practitioners to allow for the broadest possible basis for generalisation and deduction, there are no "one size fits all" recipes to be recommended due to the diverse conditions of organisational backgrounds. However, even the consideration, exploration and, if required, modification of those supporting instruments has had a positive impact on quality development and improvement in efficiency on the side of emerging Children's University projects.

In return, mere being associated with EUCU.NET under the EUCU.NET partner logo provided public recognition and thereby had an impact on how the own approach was being reflected and how project organizers are standing behind their activities in face of "critical friends".

Within the two years of EUCU.NET as a funded project, more than 140 organisations have signed up their activities and projects with EUCU.NET and – in doing so – made visible to the public that they are no lone players in a local environment, but rather that there is a European dimension behind the concept – and that this also serves as a label of quality and activates sense of responsibility and reliability.

However, the motivation still remains on the side of the active individuals and the key persons to initiate and establish a Children's University project at a particular university, to develop it further and to make it a success finally, based on benchmarks and comparison – even though the required resources in terms of time, budget, room and appreciation must be granted by the hosting institutions.

Impact on individual levels

At the same time when EUCU.NET was aiming to support institutions in developing knowledge, capacity and quality awareness as for their Children's University activities, it was also addressing individuals as the key persons. EUCU.NET has particularly looked at the role of key players within both the delivery and advocacy for Children's universities and SiS activities for children and young people in general, as well as within strategy and policy making at institutional, national European and global arenas.

Individual Key Players have a huge, and often, not fully recognised role in both of these. Key players are people with passion for science communication. They actively seek to promote this ambition to children. Some of them are scientists, researchers with a depth of knowledge and passion to communicate their science. Some are organisers of SiS activities, who are often driven by a strong sense of social justice, recognising the rewards and benefits that come to young people, their communities and society by progression to higher education and in particularly the study of science. The third group are managers who take their passion into driving their institutions/organisations into contributing the maximum to today's society – most of all by influencing a future student's population and thereby having a wider societal impact - and all that this involves. Some people are/or have been all three of these - special people; who have often made significant changes within their own institution/organisation as a consequence of their passion.

For example, Prof. Georg Winckler – rector of the University of Vienna (AT) and President of the European University Association (EUA) 2004-2009 - speaking at the EUCU.NET TwinCity Conference, Dec. 2009, talked about his own personal journey as an economist and how much this had been influenced by engagement with children, as well how through Children's University his institution was encouraged to develop a dedicated workplan to put emphasis on aspects of diversity management and sustainable promotion of young talents:

"*I myself was one of the lecturers in Children's University and as an economist I tried to answer the question "How to become as rich as Scrooge McDuck?" Unfortunately, we could not find a general principle when discussing with the children – but many other important aspects came to the fore: inflation, debt or different currencies. But at the end of the lecture we agreed, that all of us get rich in this lectures: rich in knowledge and experience - both the children and me as the lecturer. I would not want to miss that wonderful experience and the frankly questions raised by the children at eye level.*"[14]

Other than the abovementioned example, key players are quite often isolated as individuals within their academic discipline and/or institution. EUCU.NET has explored, through constructive dialogue within EUCU.NET activities, what the issues are around being a key player, and linked to this to the identification of support requirements for individuals as key players.

These requirements were integrated into the networking, conferences, mentoring and exchanges, guidelines etc. – ie. into the mutual learning within the whole EUCU.NET project. Thereby, EUCU.NET has not only achieved an impact on organsiational levels, but also on individual's capacity building and their requirements of supportive networks. Consequently, individuals were supported to recognise, and to maximise their role as ke yplayers and agents of institutional innovation and change.

Engagement in this process has raised awareness among key players and professionals as concerns the addressing of children and young people with issues of current research, future challenges, public participation, career options and how to successfully include these aspects into Children's University activities, i.e. gear their activities towards the need on prospects of children and young people. Moreover, the adoption of the EUCU.NET declarations and guidelines may trigger self-commitment and a learning process on institutional levels, as it requires reconsidering internal organizational policies as to reach children and young people as a target group and – in return – reflecting how this impacts on the governance of the institutions and the implementation of specific measures within relationships within science and society.

Consequently, EUCU.NET has supported to give individual motivation a distinctive mission and – at the same time, facilitating a learning process on institutional levels: In many cases, this also had an impact on the sustained institutionalization of Children's Universities, as the role of individuals as key persons for institutional development triggered by the implementation of Children's Universities was increasingly acknowledged by their organisation's officials and peers.

Another example for impact on personal levels – which is also closely linked to institutional change and progress – is the required consideration and individual reflection of teaching habits: There are many field reports from practice, where academics with a decade-long teaching experience admitted that their involvement in Children's University was an impetus to reconsider the way they normally explain, involve and listen to students – as continuing of the same teaching routines would not apply for children and young people as a target audience and complex issues needed to be paraphrased, contextualised and linked with everyday experience. Academics are saying that this was notably supported by EUCU.NET networking activities and – in return – had an impact of how they engage with adult students.

It make be taken as a proof for this phenomenon – however not evaluated in detailed numbers – that there is a tendency on the side of academics to include their Children's University involvement in their scientific CVs, and thereby express in a professional context that their ability to

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[14] Video of the welcome address available under http://eucu.net/events/conference/twin-city

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communicate science and their complex issues of research to a wider public was basically attested by the organizers of Children's Universities.

Moreover, within the EUCU.NET Mentoring programme, participants increasingly used this opportunity to recommend lecturers and science communicator who have successfully participated in a Children's University programme at another university or in another region or even country. There is always a need for adding new perspectives and fields of interest to Children's Universities – in many cases relating to issues which are currently in a public debate or of societal relevance, as e.g. the Grand Challenges are – and this is particularly facilitated by guest contributions, which have already been successful within other programms.

Besides making it easier for organsiers to develop interesting programms deriving from current research, this kind of cooperation and exchange of individual expertise exceptionally contributes to the exchange of scientific "cultures" and the internationalisation of the entire Children's University approach – and this was in fact initiated and supported by the EUCU.NET Mentoring programme and networking events.

This effect may be even more significant, if not only single contributions to the programme are shared between organisers of Children's University-like projects, but if the implementation of entire projects is transferred by key players into different cultures and places – beyond the limits of countries and nations. As an illustrative example may be taken the launch of a Children's University at the Virginia Tech (Virginia Bioinformatics Institute) in Blacksburg, Virginia (USA) – where Children's University has been a totally unconsidered approach in this region before. But as this model was initiated by a German expatriate with reference to the history of Children's Universities and showcase projects in Germany, commitment was granted by university officials and the "Kids Tech University" was implemented successfully – and is now closely linked with EUCU.NET[15]

Sustainability of the overall EUCU.NET approach

All the facets of impact as outlined above were notably facilitated and/or supported by EUCU.NET activities, deliverables processes – and many of them were documented in the **EUCU.NET White Book as a "*Reference Guide on Children's Universities*"**, which serves as a relevant handbook for those who are interested in the Children's University model as organizers, organsiers to-be, academics, policy makers or funding authorities. Moreover, it serves as an evidence for the reliability, the sustainability and the relevance of Children's Universities.

More than 2.000 copies were circulated already and free copies are still available via order form on www.eucu.net – and shall encourage even more universities to follow up and engage in a dialogue with children and young people.

Furthermore, it make be taken as evidence for the sustainability of the EUCU.NET approach – and for the fact that there is still a massive interest in and need for cooperation, exchange and lobbying for the concerns of Children's University. Before the funding period of EUCU.NET has come to an end, there was clear response from networking partners, beneficiaries, advisors and associates that activities shall go on and not end with the phasing-out of public funding.

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[15] See http://kidstechuniversity.vbi.vt.edu/

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Consequently, the conditions and requirements were thoroughly determined based on EUCU.NET experiences during the funding period – and finally EUCU.NET was established as an **independent legal entity in the form of a non-profit association under Austrian law** in 2010. EUCU.NET has a range of more than 40 founding members – whereas most of them were already involved in EUCU.NET during the funding period. This may be taken as a proof for its sustainable impact on the relevance of Children's University with a view to practice and policy of raising awareness as for science issues and continuing education, for equal access and promotion of educational opportunities.

Moreover, the relevance of the EUCU.NET Membership Association was highlighted by the fact that its representatives were invited to present the network and the work programme for the future at the Work EXPO in Shanghai in 2010 – which gave even more momentum to the idea and the visions of Children's Universities in face of the unthinkable opportunities which the Asian education systems, the tremendous population sizes and the vast velocity of societal change and economic development may open up for this particular model of raising science awareness.

5. Contact details

Website

All EUCU.NET project material, conference documentation, photos and videos are available from the project website: www.eucu.net

Some content may be restricted to registered members and not be available for the general public; if you are interest in a particular document of restricted access, please contact info@eucu.net
Furthermore, the website is now in use for the EUCU.NET membership association, which was established after the end of the funding period – and may change from time to time. If you should be interested in a particular document, which is not available any longer, please contact info@eucu.net

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