Higher education change with regard to academic curricula and teaching practices in light of open innovation for the benefit of cultural organisations (D5.5)

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Consortium

The consortium governing the project is adequately representing a wide range of expertise, as 4 Higher Education Institutions and 1 university library (NTNU, Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna, Sofia University ST Kliment Ohridski, University of Tartu) join hands with a web education specialist (Web2Learn) and an NGO of 16 cultural associations: OSYGY. This mix of knowledge, skills, experiences and networks guarantees a layered approach toward a diverse range of stakeholders.

	Name	Short Name	Country
1	**Norwegian University of Sciences and Technology**	NTNU	Norway
2	**Scuola Superiore di Studi Universitari e di Perfezionamento Sant'Anna, Pisa**	SA	Italy
3	**Web2Learn**	W2L	Greece
4	**Sofia University St Kliment Ohridski**	SU	Bulgaria
5	**University of Tartu**	UT	Estonia
6	**Federation of Women Association "Kores of Cyclades"**	OSYGY	Greece

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Statement of originality:

This deliverable contains original unpublished work except where clearly indicated otherwise. Acknowledgement of previously published material and of the work of others has been made through appropriate citation, quotation or both.

Disclaimer:

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List of abbreviations

The following table presents the acronyms used in the deliverable in alphabetical order.

Abbreviations	Description
CHOs	**Cultural Heritage Organisations**
D	**Deliverable**
HE	**Higher Education**
HEIs	**Higher Education Institutions**
OI	**Open Innovation**
OIPs	**Open Innovation Projects**
PR	**Project Result**

1. Rationale

The eCHOIng project responds to a pressing need of our time: to foster civic engagement in small and medium cultural heritage organisations (CHOs) that have felt the most the repercussions of the COVID-19 and financial crises. To realise a sustainable pathway that will ensure the revival of CHOs, eCHOIng mobilised higher education institutions (HEIs) and open innovation (OI) as means of academia-cultural heritage (CH)-society collaboration.

In this framework, this report presents impact of the eCHOIng Open Innovation Projects (OIPs) in terms of potential changes in higher education (HE) curricula and teaching practices. Within eCHOIng, academia-CHOs and society are brought together through OIPs. The aim of the OIPs is to leverage the CH sector. This powerful connection is also set to bring innovations with regards to existing HE educational and teaching approaches.

OIPs are seen as a "meeting point", an opportunity for knowledge and experiences sharing between cultural heritage stakeholders and university ones (staff and students). Designed as short interventions at the premises of CHOs, OIPs served as focal points of reflection, collaboration and group work between the university as teaching, learning and research, and CHOs as hosting organisations of open innovation experimentations. This report brings to the fore key reflections and recommendations on how the OIP experience can revolutionise learning and collaboration between academia-CHOs for the revival of the CH sector.

The report unfolds in three sections: first, it provides a brief but fundamental overview of the problem that the eCHOIng project was designed to address through its OIPs. Secondly, it shares key insights on actions and recommendations that aim to foster meaningful change in HE curricula and teaching practices, while in the third section, conclusions summarise the potential of OIPs as participatory and digitally-enhanced means of civic engagement in CH.

1.1. The problem at stake

In the face of an increasingly challenging social landscape, the need for closer and solid cooperation among knowledge institutions and wider social actors is key to ensure resilience and prosperity of sectors and communities (Drakaki, Kovács, & Tzionas, 2023). Indicatively, the COVID-19 pandemic has acted as a trigger for experts and citizens to realise the impact of the crisis in small and medium-size CHOs, and the unleashed potential of cross-sectoral collaborations. In this framework, enhancing academia-CHO collaboration becomes key thanks to the human and material resources that universities can provide to museums, libraries, archives and galleries.

Thus, the observed weak cooperation between HEIs and CHOs (van den Dries et al. 2019) led the eCHOIng partnership to design and implement a project that does exactly this; bringing together universities and CHOs through open innovation (OI) as a bridge upon which to a) foster revival of the CH sector, b) enrich teaching practices in HEIs and c) expand HEIs' social mission and impact.

By recognising the problem at stake (lack of continuous cooperation between academia and CHOs), eCHOIng aimed to mobilise academic communities (staff and students) to engage in OIPs for the regeneration of CHOs. As a result of this approach, HEIs also benefit from collaborating with CHOs as they gain knowledge and access on cultural heritage collections and archives, while HE students have the opportunity to both test their knowledge in practice and simultaneously be involved in initiatives of high societal impact and value (see section 2 on how OIPs can revolutionise HE teaching practices and curricula).

1.2.   The eCHOIng OIPs

From March 2023 to January 2024, the planned OIPs aimed to enhance collaboration between HEIs and small CHOs in Europe, particularly at the aftermath of social challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Carried out by eCHOIng academic and CHO partners, 24 OIPs have been planned. They successfully implemented the participatory-based and action-oriented approach undertaken by the project consortium and associated CHOs. In the eCHOIng report by Evangelista & Sasso, (2023) one can consult details of the OIPs design and implementation.

In particular, the OIPs unfolded in a series of crowd-based and community-oriented actions, such as gameathons, sockathons and do-it-yourself workshops carried out within the premises of CHOs by HE staff, students and CH staff. Through the OIPs, participants ideated and worked on low-budget, grassroots and accessible Ideas and solutions that would foster civic engagement in small and medium CHOs.

2.   Actions leading to changes in HE curricula and teaching practices

The eCHOIng partnership's acknowledgement of the societal value of OI and OIPs is based on two factors: a) a robust desk research at the beginning of the project that led to the outline of the eCHOIng methodology (Angeletaki & Rice, 2024), and b) the implementation and evaluation of the 24 eCHOIng OIPs.

2.1.   Outline of interviews and desk research results

Precisely, the very first activities of the eCHOIng project consisted of a desk research and interview series with CH and HE staff that aimed to map, identify and analyse

existing good practices and attitudes of HEIs-CHOs collaboration through OI in Europe. The results of this research process are presented by Mavroudi & Angeletaki (2022) who brought to the fore interesting findings with regards to the integration of OIPs in HE curricula and teaching practices. Precisely:

- *The respondents hold dear the idea of cultural heritage as a safeguard of the past and desire to experiment with innovative forms, despite their different backgrounds.*
- *Most respondents are familiar with various types of OI, but their application in institutional practice still remains an unexplored field.*
- *Motivation for embracing OI relies heavily firstly on financial support and investment on human resources, and secondly on understanding its relevance to cultural heritage practitioners/participants, its usefulness, and its potential impact.*

2.2.   Evaluation results of the eCHOIng OIPs

Methodology

To evaluate the impact of the OIPs among HE staff, students and CH staff, online questionnaires were produced and distributed to participants in three collection periods (pre-, post-, and six months post-OIP). The surveys targeted three dimensions of sustainability in OIPs, namely "governance", "financing" and "civic engagement". Below, we focus on key feedback received with regards to the further application of OIPs in formal educational contexts in the aftermath of their implementation. More insights on the evaluation process and its results are available in the impact report (Zourou & Oikonomou, 2024).

Results

When it comes to the attractiveness of OIPs among HE staff, students and CH staff who engaged in this long and co-creative process, the majority of them claim they are interested in applying OIPs as part of their regular teaching and learning practices (Figure 1). Additionally, a significant number of them declared having already applied knowledge and skills gained through the OIPs six months since their completion (Figure 2).
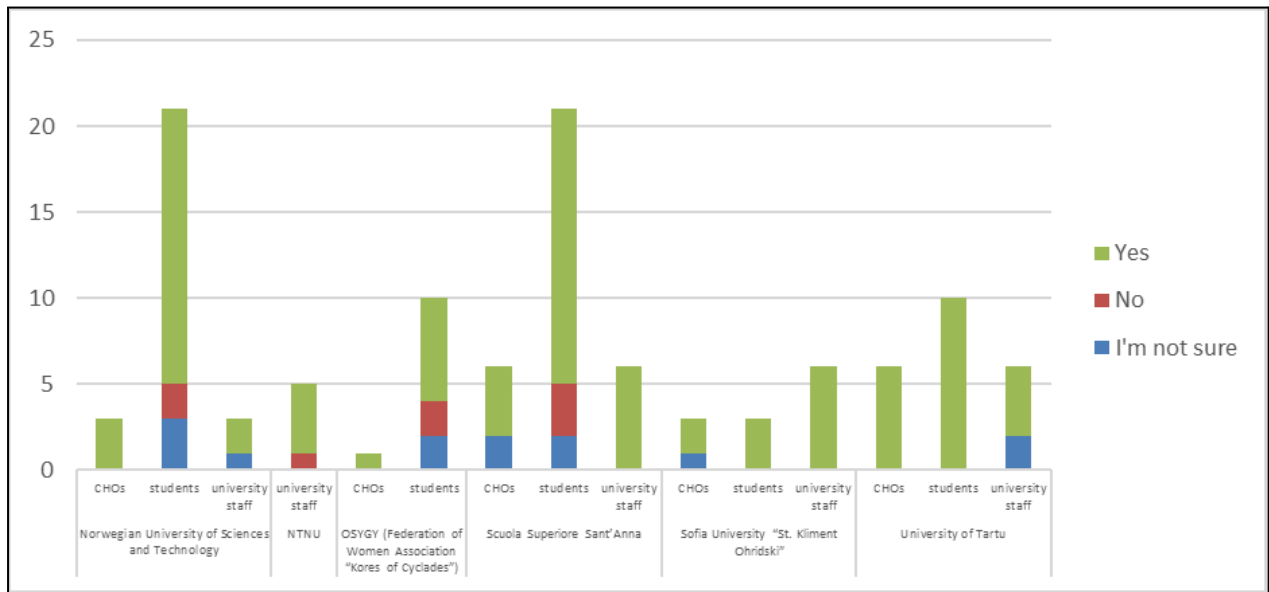
Figure 1. Post-OIP survey question "Do you plan to apply knowledge and skills acquired through the project in your daily activities?". Source: eCHOIng consortium. Credits: Claire Fragkiadaki, Web2Learn
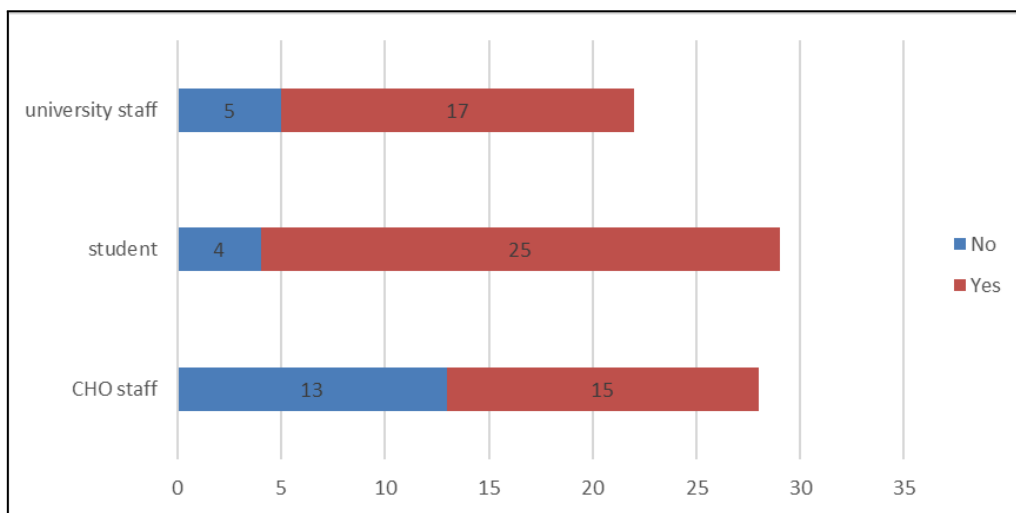

Figure 2. 6 month post-OIP survey question "Did you apply knowledge and skills acquired through the project the last six months?". Source: eCHOIng consortium. Credits: Claire Fragkiadaki, Web2Learn

Interestingly, HE students were the ones that have most vividly embraced OIPs as effective, participatory and learning activities that increased their motivation to engage with small and medium CHOs (Zourou & Oikonomou, 2024). Similarly, it is positively observed that HE and CH staff recognise the value of academia-CHOs collaboration and have made progress in forging such solid collaborations in the aftermath of the eCHOIng OIPs (Figure 3).
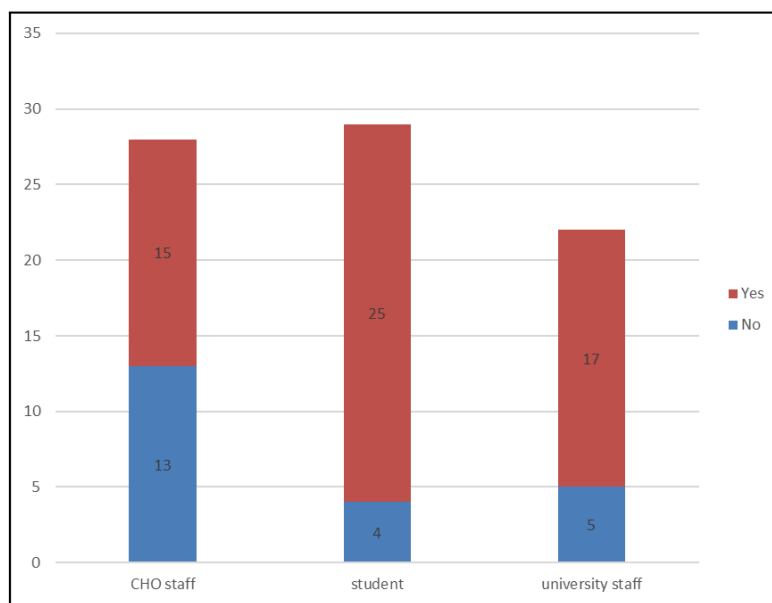
Figure 3. 6 month post-OIP survey question "Did you apply for funding from your
institution to organise an OIP the last six months?"

2.3. Recommendations

In light of the positive feedback on OIPs that the eCHOIng consortium received from its target groups, a change in existing practices and attitudes within academic communities is already observed.

To realise the full potential of OIPs within HE curricula and teaching practices, a series of recommendations are provided for HE staff, to facilitate the uptake of the eCHOIng approach in formal HE educational settings and offers. In particular:

1. **Enhancing Financial Support**:
    ○ Institutions should develop robust financial support systems for OIPs, including dedicated funding lines and financial management training for project leaders. This will ensure that innovative projects have the necessary resources to thrive and contribute effectively to the academic environment.

2. **Strengthening Partnerships**:
    ○ HEIs and CHOs should continue to cultivate strong partnerships, leveraging each other's strengths to enhance the sustainability and impact of OIPs.

3. **Diversifying Funding Sources**:
    ○ Efforts should be made to identify and secure multiple funding sources, including grants, sponsorships, and public-private partnerships.

Diversifying funding will reduce reliance on a single funding stream and provide more sustainability for ongoing and future projects.

4. **Improving Engagement Strategies**:

   ○ Enhanced support mechanisms and resources should be provided to CHOs to improve their ability to apply for funding and sustain long-term engagement with HEIs.

5. **Adapting Teaching and Learning Methods:**

   ○ HEIs should adapt their teaching and learning methods to incorporate digital tools and platforms that facilitate citizen-driven innovation. This includes using online collaboration tools, virtual reality, and other digital technologies to enhance the learning experience.

3. Conclusions

The present report aimed to showcase ongoing and future changes in HE curricula and teaching practices as a result of the implementation of eCHOIng OIPs for the benefit of the CH sector. Despite the short period since the completion of the OIPs, their evaluation brought to the fore a significant potential for the enrichment and expansion of formal HE teaching practices with OI actions that foster both learning and social impact of HE research and studies.

In particular, according to the post-OIP questionnaires filled in by HE and CH staff, the integration of OIPs in educational courses and teaching practices has already started taking shape within the institutions that were involved in the 24 eCHOIng OIPs. Hence, moving beyond the perception and application of OIPs as extra-curricular or informal learning approaches, HE staff recognise their value as integral parts of the educational offer and claim to be willing to further adopt them as a way to enhance either the academia-CHO-society collaboration or the revival of the CH sector.

Finally, the impact assessment of the eCHOIng OIPs brought forward key insights on factors and conditions that influence the uptake of OIPs as a means to build strong academia-CHOs partnerships and initiatives. Motivated to increase the integration of OIPs within HE curricula and teaching practices, the report provided a series of recommendations that aim to strengthen progress towards this goal.

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