UniTrento in the very first Society Quest Event

ECIU University places the challenge-based approach at the centre of its pedagogics, research and innovation. The main idea is to bring the outside world into the curriculum. To do so, one of its members, Linköping University, hosted the very first European Society Quest Event yesterday. University of Trento with Trento Municipality and HIT Innovation Hub participated.

Trento, 17th February 2020 – At the event, external partners presented suggestions for societal challenges for ECIU University to solve. Partners included delegates from local authorities, non-government organisations and regional development agencies. They provided a brief insight into the issues they face by means of pitches. That varied from environmental issues to tourism and from the provision of affordable housing to combating school dropout. Frequently used terms included: stimulating economic growth, energy transition, mobility and digitisation.

The idea is for joint input to produce manageable and feasible challenges that ECIU University can use to shape its challenge-based education (CBE). Andrea Brose, Head of the Centre for Teaching and Learning at Hamburg University of Technology: ‘CBE creates opportunities for finding new solutions to real-life problems. It motivates students by allowing them work on a relevant topic in teams. They are in charge of their learning process and it allows teachers and other stakeholders to contribute to lifelong learning. Students, teachers and the whole community can benefit from the work of the university and new collaborations can be developed. The learning process is now seen from both the students’ and the facilitators’ point of view. That can be a motivating factor for both sides.’

Linköping University, the university organising the initiative, is regarded as a pioneer in challenge-based learning. ‘Students tackle societal issues and problems presented by our partners and stakeholders,’ says Jan Axelsson, Director of Valorisation at Linköping University. ‘Collaboration with society around us is a cornerstone of the success of our university. We link our education to the labour market. This way, we strengthen the relevance of our research and we put our knowledge directly back into society. It’s a win-win situation.’

During the SQE, the pitches were followed by workshops based on thematic discussions to put the challenges into context and find common ground for development and potential actions within the ECIU University framework.

ECIU University is an EU-funded collaboration between 13 universities in the ECIU network. Its aim is to pilot an innovative, challenge-based university model.