

EUTOPIA Certificate of Internationalisation (EUCI): **SUMMARY ESSAY¹**

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¹Please find attached all elements of the portfolio in the following google drive location: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1cDgNdPNnYt8TdmrMh1hzt_oPXu8UYibo?usp=sharing

The 21st century will be defined by the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs), adopted in 2015. I firmly believe that the way to meet the goals and guarantee the mitigation of the challenges, such as social inequality, climate change, loss of biodiversity, poverty, etc. is by involving all stakeholders and giving them ownership on the solution design and its implementation. Therefore, civil society as a whole has a very important role to play in achieving the UNSDGs. The challenges and goals themselves are all interconnected as for example climate change can arguably be in the centre of it all. As it is an issue that does not belong to one nation but the world as a whole — we all contribute to the crisis and we will all suffer the consequences; international cooperation is indispensable in mitigating it as it is in all transnational crisis.

I am hoping that through my academic work, civil engagement, as well as my everyday activities I will be contributing to the solution rather than the problem. Throughout my life I have come to the realisation that we are diverse but also there are a lot of things that bound us and that working together, overcoming our differences and using our diversity to its advantage can help us cooperate and design creative solutions to mitigate the issues, such as the climate crisis that we share. Reflecting back I think that for years, I have been preparing for this moment.

As a child, I was exposed to two very different cultures — the Bulgarian one, that has a thick authenticity to it and the American one, that is a product of years of immigrations and fusion of different cultures. Before, I always thought of Bulgarian culture as close-minded and backward, but with the time I have come to appreciate that both have their strengths and weaknesses and that neither should dominate but they should find ways to co-exist.

I decided to study neither in Bulgaria, nor in the US because I was curious to what else can the world offer. I moved to France in my early twenties and then to Spain, and although they are neighbours, I found the ways people communicate and the priorities that they chose to be very different. Once again I was surprised by the diversity but also by the so many similarities that exist despite them. There are a few universal things — love, friendship, desire to help, desire to be happy and want for security. There are others but here I want to focus on the idea that it is in our nature, no matter where we are from, to want to communicate and cooperate with our fellow humans.

When I started university in Barcelona, I was not planning on making friends. But working together and sharing experiences, naturally led to that. And I am so happy it did. Although, I felt world apart from my classmates in the beginning we found commonalities and ways to show our appreciation for each other through the work we did together. Without the ability to work with others, exchange ideas and fuse visions non of the projects exposed in this portfolio would have been possible. Besides my trajectory, which I believe is a key to obtaining my international perspective, I have included two projects here: the EUTOPIA Open Innovation Challenge and a Report on the Assessment of UPF's policy in the scope of SDG 3.5.

The reason for choosing the EUTOPIA Open Innovation Challenge is that I see the project as one of the most eye-opening in terms of methodology, team work as well as a test to my interculturalism and ability to apply what I have learned through my university degree in a project that is related and yet very different from what I studied. By working with people from different parts of Spain but most importantly from different disciplines, I was exposed to a variety of opinions and perspectives. We had more than one conflicts due to misunderstanding in the beginning but through good coordination and taking time to comprehend the reasons behind our differences, we understood that our ideas were compatible after all. The project we came up with (find in the folder of the portfolio: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1cDgNdPNnYt8TdMrMh1hzt_oPXu8UYibo?usp=sharing) is the very product of coordinating all our ideas in one – all team members had a take in the project.

I applied what I learned through this work – project management methodology, organising techniques, research and team work models, etc; not only in my consecutive group projects in university but also to the way I work in my new job as a campaign assistant. This is why I have also included the Report on the Assessment of UPF's policy in the scope of SDG 3.5. The subjects of the two projects was very different yet the methodology, work pattern and glocal approach is applied in a similar way in both of these projects. So the report is added with the idea to show how it is possible to effectively apply the methodology and approach to various disciplines and subjects.

Apart from these projects, I want to mention the important role that the 4 EUCI seminars on learning outcomes has played in giving me the tools to better reflect on how the different activities and my life experience have helped me to gain a more intercultural and intersectional understanding of how to meet challenges and come up with solutions from international perspective. Unfortunately, not all learning examples can be included in this short portfolio so I have focused on a few key ones for my personal experience that hopefully demonstrate that I have achieved international understanding and perspective. But what does that really mean?

I have put a lot of thought in what is internationalisation and after my EUTOPIA experience, I understand internationalisation as the act of adapting a solution to both global and local characteristics, using the glocal approach, not only so it can be more easily applied but also so it is actually more effective. This would involve consideration and deep understanding of both the global and local implications of the issue as well as cooperation with local, regional and international authorities and stakeholders. By gaining this appreciation for both global and local, I hope internationalisation to be the bridge necessary to close the gap between them. While my experience in team work can definitely help me design efficient and effective solutions to today's transboundary crisis, that are grounded in diversity, cooperation and minding the different perspectives. I hope this is a step in the right direction towards achieving the UNSDGs.