



upgrade2europe Process Model

– draft version for testing –





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Copyright and Liabilities

Project and Consortium Partners

Executive Summary

Introduction

An introduction to the upgrade2europe project – Why do we need a process model for Europeanisation?

Europeanisation and Internationalisation – What makes the EU special?

Abroad but not foreign: Europeanisation in the European single market is different from internationalisation for the global market

Availability of EU funding for Europeanisation activities etc.

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The maturity model approach

A maturity model conceptually represents phases of increased quantitative or qualitative capability changes of a maturing element in order to assess its advances with respect to defined focus areas (Kohlegger, Maier, & Thalmann, 2009).

A maturity model is a tool that can support organisations to assess their effectiveness in specific domains and understand the actions they need to undertake in order to improve and "mature", focusing on the capabilities and/or tools required.

The concept of a maturity model was first applied by Richard L. Nolan of Harvard University, who in 1973, published the stages of growth model for IT organisations. Following Nolan's work, Watts Humphrey (1986) at the Carnegie-Mellon Institute, combined with the work of others, began developing maturity models, eventually known as Capability Maturity Model (CMM). While maturity models were originally developed for the software engineering industry, they can also be used to assess the current state of an entity's business capabilities (Caralli, Knight, & Montgomery, 2012).

The maturity model approach demonstrates how an organisation's performance matures over time, based on specific challenges they must address and problems they must solve in specific domains and areas of operation.

In its simplest form, a maturity model is a set of characteristics and indicators that represent progression and achievement in a particular domain or discipline and it allows the organisation to have its methods and processes evaluated against a clear set of indicators that establish a benchmark.

The process of evaluating the maturity level of an organisation in a specific area or domain begins with an assessment of the current state of the entity's capability and by measuring the maturity of the specific business capability's components and key areas.¹

Following the principle that small steps are more efficient when compared to larger ones, maturity models provide a framework for organising these small progressive steps into organisational maturity levels and then measuring them.

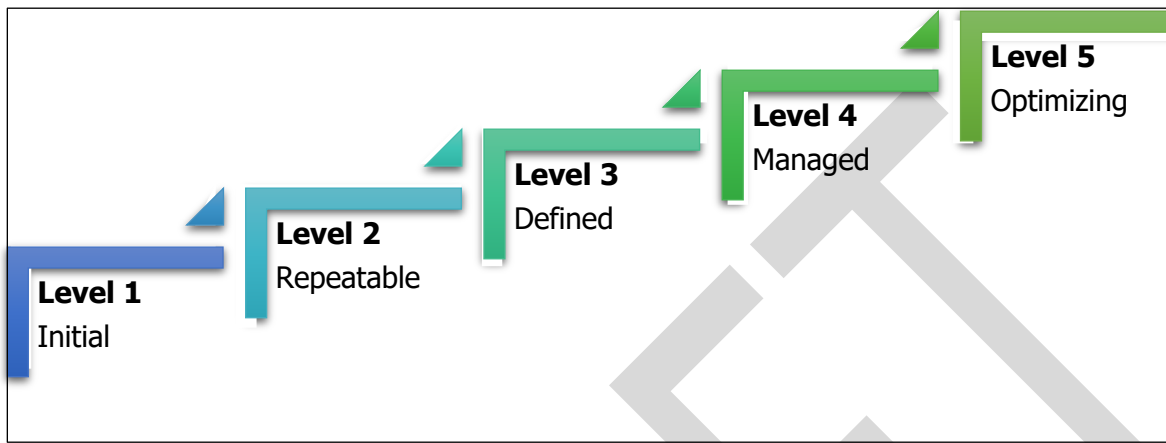
Each maturity level provides guidance and foundations in order for organisations to achieve continuous improvement and advance from one maturity level to the next. It can be seen as a "guided" playing field that can support organisations to improve and advance their capabilities in a specific area.²

Organisations are generally involved in complex activities and moving through levels of maturity, while improving their effectiveness and efficiency at each level, is essential. As organisations become more

¹ The Online Assessment was developed for this purpose and it can be found at this address (will provide reference to other tools that will be developed under the u2e project)

² The Playbook developed for this purpose can be found at(will provide reference to other tools that will be developed under the u2e project)

experienced in each domain and develop effective systems supporting their activities and operations, they become more "mature" in their overall approach.



It is important to understand that a maturity model, while important in its own right, it will not ensure organisational improvement by itself, it will rather provide measurement and an indicator of evolution that can support organisations identify their weaknesses and develop corrective plans.³

The result of the maturity model, is to provide a system that will support an organisation achieve continuous improvement, ultimately leading to self-improvement. The maturity model approach can facilitate continuous improvement as it can allow organisations to audit processes which are actually used in day-to-day operations, evaluate their effectiveness, identify improvements, and implement them.

Maturity levels are composed of predefined key process areas and are measured by the achievement of specific and generic goals that apply to each area. Each maturity level is composed of key process areas. Each key process area identifies a combination of related activities that can support an organisation achieve a set of goals considered important for establishing process capability at that maturity level when performed collectively.

The original Capability Maturity Model concept (White C. , 2000) was developed with five maturity levels: **Initial , Repeatable, Defined, Managed and Optimising.**

The following table describes the characteristics of Capability Maturity Models, in each maturity level in detail.

The upgrade2europe maturity model, is an innovative multi-dimensional approach, with four (4) domains of capabilities and four (4) levels of maturity.

³ The Playbook developed for this purpose can be found at(will provide reference to other tools that will be developed under the u2e project)



The upgrade2europe maturity model will bring consistency and a common understanding within the organisations that will adapt it, on the actions they need to undertake in order to operate across Europe. The model will additionally provide a performance measurement framework for continuous improvement. Details on the upgrade2europe maturity model are presented and elaborated in Chapters 5 and 6.

It is noted that while the table below has been developed using bibliography and international best practices, certain amendments were implemented taking into consideration the needs of the project's target group. For the purposes of the "upgrade2europe" project the capabilities included in levels 4 and 5 are merged, as we anticipate that this will better serve the needs of our target groups, which include small and micro enterprises and SMOs.

The capability maturity model approach can better support our target group as on the one hand it identifies best practices for specific processes or business areas and at the same time evaluates the maturity of an organisation in terms of how many of those practices it has managed to implement (Hammer, 2007).

A maturity model can offer a predictable pattern that can support evolution and change by employing a predefined sequence of levels, from the initial level, which can be considered the as-is state, all the way through to achieving the required maturity, the managed level in the case of the upgrade2europe model (Poeppelbuss & Roeglinger, 2011).



Levels of the Upgrade2europe maturity model	
Levels	Characteristics
Level 1 Initial	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Clear need to increase the ability to upgrade2europe. This level can be characterised by the following aspects in particular:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Unstable operating environment, the organisation mainly reacts to its environment.○ Ad hoc, undocumented processes in the area of upgrade2europe. The organisation does not apply successful processes from other fields of activity to upgrade2europe.○ The organisation is relying on specific individuals.
Level 2 Repeatable	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● A basic ability to upgrade2europe is in place. This level can be characterised by the following aspects in particular:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Some processes are repeatable so that they can lead to consistent and measurable results.○ Processes, projects, and activities are partly planned, monitored, and controlled.○ One or more individuals have been appointed and given specific tasks in the area of upgrade2europe.
Level-3 Defined	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● A solid ability to upgrade2europe is in place. This level can be characterised by the following aspects in particular:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Many processes are well defined and understood throughout the organisation, based on standards, methods and tools, and are continuously improved.○ The established degree of structure and standardisation bring reliability and efficiency.○ Individuals appointed and entrusted with specific tasks in the area of upgrade2europe are capable of performing their respective responsibilities.
Level-4 Managed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● A strong ability to upgrade2europe is in place. This level can be characterised by the following aspects in particular:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Processes



	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ are stable and flexible. They can be measured using qualitative and / or quantitative indicators that show what added value they create.▪ have been repeatedly tested, refined and adapted in multiple conditions across the organisation.▪ can be easily adapted to meet the requirements of other endeavours in the organisation. <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Key individuals / process users are competent in the established process and comfortable in deploying them in various environments.○ Continuous improvement in response to changes and opportunities and the identification and use of new tools is in practice.○ Quality and process performance is documented in a transparent way for all stakeholders to facilitate decision-making.
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The following concepts were taken into consideration when developing the model: (What is Maturity Model, n.d.), (Henshall, 2019), (Ambrosio, 2020) and (White S. K., 2018).

Each maturity level of the upgrade2europe project will be connected to a combination of Key Process Areas (KPAs) and the related activities that will contribute to support our target group achieve the goal of upgrading to Europe and to continuously improve their processes (Wagenstein, 2006).



Links with the Europeanisation project

- How upgrade2europe relates to the Europeanisation project. The chapter is anticipated to include cross-references to the Europeanisation project, the process etc.
- What has changed? Do we need new thematic areas for the upgrade2europe analysis?

Concept of Europeanisation

The definition of the term Europeanisation varies and refers to numerous related phenomena and modes of change. Three of the most common definitions from a political science perspective can be distinguished, illustrating the concept of Europeanisation from the prism of each category. From the historical perspective, Europeanisation refers to the spread of various European political practices, traits and characteristics and "way of life" throughout and outside the European continent achieved primarily through colonisation (Featherstone & Radaelli, 2003). The definition of Europeanisation through the lens of culture and identity can be found in anthropology, according to which Europeanisation "refers to the reshaping of identities in contemporary Europe in a manner which relativises (without necessarily supplanting) national identities." (Harmsen & Wilson, 2000). When it comes to the third category of defining the terms from the perspective of political Europe, the definitions usually focus on the European Union (Howell, 2002). Within the context of the EU is the enlargement, development of the policies at the EU level and its influence over the states adopting EU policies and traits.

Three the most common definitions are (i) the process during which nation-states are adopting many European features, (ii) the growth of continental European identity above national identities and (iii) the process of EU socio-economic and political dynamics becoming part of organisational logic. Based on the existing literature in the field, there are three ways to interpret Europeanisation.

Top-down or "downloading" approach

According to Ladrech's (1994) top-down approach, "EC political and economic dynamics become part of the organisational logic of national politics and policy-making." As Börzel & Risse (2003) explained, what is meant by Ladrech's "organisational logic" is the organisations' adaptive processes to a changed or changing environment. According to this definition, the Union impacts and influences the nation. Thus, the nation-state is in the reactive mode. The concept is further elaborated by Radaelli (2002), who describes Europeanisation as "a process involving a) construction, b) diffusion and c) institutionalisation of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, 'ways of doing things' and shared beliefs and norms which are first defined and consolidated in the EU policy process and then incorporated in the logic of domestic (national and subnational) discourse, political structures and public choices." This process includes institution-building at the European level and explores how



the Europeanisation process impacts the member states (Moumoutzis, 2011). The top-down approach can also be referred to with the concept of "downloading", which explains how the member states or the third countries can be good at (downloading) EU policies and implementing them into their national politics (Börzel & Panke, 2016).

Bottom-up or "up-loading"

The bottom-up approach is reverted – it is the nation-state affecting the EU in the policy area, which is the point where Europeanisation occurs (Harmsen & Wilson, 2000). Huntington (1993) argues that in such cases, the citizens identify themselves as Europeans instead of referring to themselves as French, German, Bulgarian, etc. The change is reflected in European institutions' creation and the gradual acquisition of authority. "Bottom-up" or "up-loading" depicts how the EU member states "upload" their domestic preferences to the EU level (Howell, 2002). They can be referred to as successful and efficient "uploader" based on acknowledging their interests at the EU policy and institutional level, they can be referred to successful and efficient "uploader" (Börzel & Panke, 2016). During this process, it is up to the member states to modify and tailor their reform strategies most efficiently and uniquely, ensuring the solution of their problems and guaranteeing the relocation of specific elements of the local political system at the EU level.

The third and "horizontal" approaches

As Oslen (2002) argues, the third interpretation of the term "Europeanisation" summarises the two definitions discussed above, which the scholar describes as the "development and consolidation of certain institutions and practices at the EU level as well as on their national political systems." The process of Europeanisation here distinguishes the aspects of the political system separately, such as rules, paradigms, policies and political programs of the member states instead of considering the political system holistically. Radaelli (2002) describes the process as the combination of designed, diffused and institutionalised formal and informal procedures, beliefs and norms, refined, analysed and consolidated as a joint EU decision. Only after that is followed their incorporation into the political structures and public policies.

Another perspective of Europeanisation is the "horizontal approach" that considers the transfer of politics, policies and policy-making between member states of the European Union. The transfer is argued to be based on a form of relatively soft law, relying on the 'best practice' and mutual recognition.

European Integration

The distinction between Europeanisation and European integration might be confusing. Despite the similarities between them, scholars have found ways to distinguish them. Although European integration is an integral contributor to the development of the theoretical framework of the EU, which started back in 1950 with the Schuman Plan (Mikkelsen, 1991), these two phenomena are still separate. The integration achieved through the coal and steel has been expanded to the different areas of



cooperation among countries, followed by and consequently enhanced by Jean Monnet's vision of technical and functional integration accomplished by political transformation.

Howell's definition of European Integration is the "convergence of relations between the various elements and institutions and/or strengthening the relationship itself, that is the intensification of any communications in the European orbit" (Howell, 2002). Furthermore, the term "integration" here also means creating the European institutions and respective policies, which later affect involved countries and societies (McGowan, 2007).

Another approach that disregards the sharp distinction or identical genesis of these two phenomena is arguing about the achieved maturity level of EU political systems, which lead to the stance where Europeanisation and European Integration have evolved to have "reflexive and dependent relationships" (Ladrech, 2014). This view is supported by Radaelli (2000), claiming that it is not possible for Europeanisation to exist without European Integration.

Europeanisation and upgrade2europe

The project Europeanisation aimed to support different target groups across Europe and was carried out over two years. The self-assessment tool developed during the project intends to help vocational education and training providers (VETs), small and medium-size organisations (SMOs) and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in their journey to Europe by providing institutions with detailed individual recommendations for future action. As discussed in the theories above, despite the Europeanisation approach, Member States' interaction with each other and the Union is vital for the successful process. However, many organisations are insufficiently equipped to meet these goals or carry out these Europeanisation strategies.

Organisations tend to face many obstacles on their way outside domestic markets (Wilson, 2006). These obstacles include:

- difficulties in financing international activity (Edinburgh Group, 2013) and in setting pricing strategies for the company (Kazimoto, 2014), limited access to financial capital (Benzing et al., 2009);
- making appropriate contacts in their target markets (Edinburgh Group, 2013), difficulties in transactions with foreign customers (Kazimoto, 2014), lack of foreign contacts and networking (Naradda Gamage et al., 2019);
- lack of foreign market knowledge (Sanyal et al., 2020) (Naradda Gamage et al., 2019), limited information to locate and analyse markets (Kazimoto, 2014);
- lack of managerial skills (Sanyal et al., 2020), (Yumkella and Vinanchiarachi, 2003);
- competition (Benzing et al., 2009), (Kazimoto, 2014);
- inability manage human resources (Benzing et al., 2009)(Kazimoto, 2014);



- complications related to the legal environment (Benzing et al., 2009), (Kazimoto, 2014), (Sanyal et al., 2020);
- lack of technology (Sanyal et al., 2020) and technical skills (Naradda Gamage et al., 2019);
- cultural and social differences (Sanyal et al., 2020).

Thus, institutions often lack a wide range of abilities in their human resources or other operational, technical and financial areas.

The internationalisation of SMEs has become vital as it helps boost growth, increase competitiveness, and contribute to the companies' resilience (Sanyal et al., 2020). When going international, SMEs prefer to outreach the markets within the same continent in which they are based (Edinburgh Group, 2013), which underlines the importance of increasing interconnectedness in Europe.

The Europeanisation project aimed to help organisations identify the necessary competencies for work on an international level through an online self-assessment tool.

Within the project's framework, to understand the benefits and challenges of Europeanisation and internalisation strategies for organisations among the Member States, a survey (Europeanisation, 2015) of 520 representatives from educational institutions was carried out between May and July 2015. The study revealed the top five benefits to be (1) the development of new skills for the staff and learners of an organisation, (2) gain access to new and essential knowledge, (3) the chance to access new sources of funding, (4) positive influence on an organisation's reputation and (5) gain access to new markets or develop new products and services. The biggest obstacles organisations face when developing internationally were (1) finding reliable international partners for cooperation, (2) establishing and maintaining project management practices that are valid at all levels and suitable for all employees, (3) strong strategic decision consistent with changes in an organisation's culture, beliefs and values, (4) solid financial management and (5) Human Resources.

It is more than five years from the completion of the survey and thus the Europeanisation project. Although the thematic areas identified and developed during the project are still significant and valid, the environment changed during the past years encourages the rethink and reevaluate the needs of target groups and how to facilitate their operation on a local, regional or international level. The continuation of the Europeanisation project is upgrade2europe, where the focus remains on having an impact on target groups and help them be better prepared to Europeanise themselves and develop more successful and durable strategies for Europeanisation and internationalisation. The challenges of internalisation and Europeanisation will be further elaborated in the following chapter; however, a brief mention here can be that the current trends in Europe and worldwide demonstrate the need for digitalisation and digital skills. Together with other edits, the importance of including this area has also been highlighted during the upgrade2europe project.



Taking into account the above-mentioned obstacles that SMEs face when trying to to extend their operations in other geographies, it is obvious that founders and employees of SMEs need to be equipped with a lot of entrepreneurship skills and need advice on on finance, risk, regulation and other matters related to doing business abroad (Edinburgh Group, 2013).

In general, entrepreneurship education is considered essential for well-being in the EU (Deveci & Seikkula-Leino, 2018). It is influenced by the process of Europeanisation (Wach 2, 2014) and is meant to create new businesses and develop creative and socially responsible behaviour skills (Bikse et al., 2014). The education sector used to have territorial boundaries and is now turning into a common educational space (Loogma).

The online self-assessment tool and educational materials developed withing the upgrade2europe project are expected to cover the needs of SMEs that are willing to engage in international activities across the EU.

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Target groups - Characteristics and Needs

- Facts and Figures on Europeanisation – what are the challenges and opportunities for the upgrade2europe target groups? / assess the degree of Europeanisation of European SMOs, SMEs and educational institutions to date
 - o SMOs – Small and medium sized organisations
 - o SMEs – Small and medium sized enterprises from the service sector
 - o Educational institutions

Based on the recent data (Cedefop, 2021), upper secondary students enrolled in vocational and general programmes (% of all students in upper secondary education, 2018) consists of 48.4 among the European Union Member States. The same study reports that lifelong learning is 10.8% among the Member States, calculated among the population aged 25 to 64 participating in education and training over the four weeks before the survey, 2019. Thus, the role and impact of VETs in Europe are significant.

Strategic planning

Although many VET providers in Europe are aware of the importance of internationalisation and have implemented strategies addressing international activities within their organisational agendas, there is still a lack of reaching its full potential. Thus, possessing the competencies needed in the increasingly international world of business and diverse European and global environments is critical. For vocational education and training providers across the EU to benefit from international cooperation, strategic planning of international activities is critical. Core values attained through strategic planning are: VETs identify the associations between the international cooperation, what are principal activities and advancement of their organisation; give direction to international activities and make them more systematic; make sure that there are enough resources to carry out the international activities and that international cooperation is in line with the overall organisational strategies (European Commission, 2017). Furthermore, strategic planning is equally eminent for principals and managers and teachers and trainers of VET providers and institutions.

Some of the challenges appearing during the strategic planning are lack of understanding of the status quo within the organisation, following an ambitious yet unrealistic vision for the future, no proper alignment of strategy and organisational culture and inability to adapt to rapidly changing (external and internal) operating conditions. The solution for these challenges adopted by VET providers is in extending their international and domestic networks and increasing their international cooperation and projects. In addition, such practices create opportunities for on-the-job learning or studying abroad, acquire knowledge through good practices.

Challenges at the organisational level

One of the apparent challenges among VETs is embedding internationalisation and Europeanisation into the organisation's daily activities. Successful practice is to appoint either a person or a small team



to coordinate and manage international activities. The responsible party can vary depending on the institution's size. While larger institutions might have a whole team working on it, smaller institutions manage them by incorporating these tasks in the teacher's and personnel's duties.

Human resources

Concern that international activities will challenge human resources among VETs is evident. There could be issues related to insufficient language skills and the requirement to train staff following European requirements. International activities require skills from the staff members, which can be challenging. Together with the overall knowledge of the organisation's operations, staff members should also be equipped with the knowledge, project and financial management skills. They should be able to critically analyse the existing situation within their organisation and foresee aimed positive changes. The lack of inclusion of the staff responsible for international work into strategic planning, international project initiation, and execution (including administration and reporting) might negatively impact. There should be an ongoing evaluation of results and outcomes, building a close relationship with international students and organisations abroad, and participating in international meetings and partnerships.

Project & financial management

Challenges VETs encounter in their Europeanisation way are broad and include infrastructure and technology, working processes, project management practices, finances, and financial management practices. Challenges regarding project management practices can vary and consist of concerns about developing projects eligible for EU funding, the need to demonstrate organisational project management maturity, and establishing an international project organisation. They can also be reflected in the necessity to reorient the organisation's specific goals, priorities and strategies, the insufficient ability for EU financial management or financial planning and the need for innovation to maintain a difference from other competing internationalised educational organisations.

Partnerships and networks

One of the key areas to direct attention when shaping international activities is building and maintaining cooperation with training institutions, workplaces, businesses, and other organisations both at home and abroad. Facilitating factor here could be an area of the study, common goals, or objectives. Nevertheless, the most significant concerns appear to be finding reliable international partners for cooperation and using acceptable forms of communication.

Curricula and qualification requirements

The purpose of vocational education and training is to train skilled workers with the ability also to develop themselves and their workplaces for the future, which is increasingly important when facing markets beyond the domestic environment. Therefore, there is a need for VETs to meet EQF standards and make their knowledge and skills transferable to other countries' settings. Standard European tools such as recognition and compatibility of qualifications through the European Qualifications Framework



(EQF), the credit transfer system ECVET have helped build a solid foundation for development. Furthermore, international competencies equip students to work in international environments, both at home and abroad.

Importance of European projects

The Europe-wide survey (Europeanisation, 2015), conducted in 2015, enquired 520 managers and teaching personnel representing all of the educational institutions (primary education, secondary education, higher education, vocational education and training (VET), adult education and even the non-formal education sector, e.g. youth) from more than 30 countries. The aim was to survey the people and evaluate their beliefs about the relevance and impact of internationalisation and Europeanisation strategies for their educational organisations.

The results of the survey indicated that EU projects could provide positive support for an organisation's internationalisation and Europeanisation strategies, in particular:

- EU projects raise awareness among the VET staff about the benefits received from international activities, especially those intangible ones such as knowledge and skills;
- Involvement in the EU projects might reduce insecurity often perceived by newcomers and their perceptions of not being competent enough to develop projects eligible for EU funding and apply respective financial management tools;
- EU projects facilitate mitigation of one of the biggest challenges identified in the study - finding reliable organisations to work with as they provide the foundation for further reliable bilateral or multilateral cooperation;
- EU projects can act as the impetus for the modernisation of an organisation's project management practices.

Need for innovation and digitalisation

Current digitalisation trends have brought challenges and opportunities to the European education and training systems and labour market (European Commission, 2020). The data proves that the demand for digital technology professionals by 4% annual growth over the past ten years resulted in 40% of the European businesses being unable to find appropriate candidates for the positions (European Commission, 2018). In addition, the Commission highlighted that although 90% of the current jobs require at least some level of digital skills, there is 44% workforce in the EU having low basic digital skills, out of which 22% are with no digital skills at all (Cedefop, 2019). This can be considered an opportunity for VET and a significant role in developing digital skills and reducing the digital divide.

Challenges related to International Activities for SMEs

Internationalisation can be understood as operations that facilitate establishing stable bonds between the company and the international markets (Root, 1994). The internationalisation process is based on



three fundamental paradigms: (i) the company should first acquire competencies in its domestic market to guarantee an international competitiveness dimension; (ii) the internationalisation process is almost always started in exports, and it is defined as being sequential, and finally (iii) upon reaching multinational status, company faces new strategic problems (Roque, Alves, & Raposo, 2019).

There are different internalisation modes: importing, exporting, foreign direct investments, having establishments abroad, technological cooperation with enterprises abroad, acting as a subcontractor for a main foreign contractor, and having foreign subcontractors (EIM Business & Policy Research, 2010). The survey Internationalisation of European SMEs (EIM Business & Policy Research, 2010) showed that more than 25% of European SMEs are involved in exporting or importing. In contrast, in the other modes, less than 10% are active.

The overall level of internationalisation of European SMEs has recently increased and consists of around 40-44% (Wach, 2014). The ongoing process of European integration and the abolition of tariff-related barriers has positively affected this process. Nevertheless, only 13% of EU SMEs are internationally active outside the EU. 56% of all small and medium-sized enterprises in the EU are not involved in any international activities (Wach, 2014). SMEs play a significant role in the European economy, thus supporting SMEs' growth and innovation potentials decisive for the future prosperity of the EU (EIM Business & Policy Research, 2011).

Barriers/challenges

SMEs are operating in a continuously changing competitive environment and those aiming to go international need to thoroughly analyse possible challenges and capabilities and identify their competitive advantages. Belles (2016) argues that only after this is it possible to establish the expansion and external market penetration strategy.

SMEs will face barriers and obstacles in the internationalisation process and offshoring strategy, which might hinder reaching their expected outcomes. The barriers for companies can be divided into two sub-groups, internal and external barriers (Jacobsson, 2015). The internal barriers encompass those directly connected to the company, for example, the personal experiences and preferences of the top manager or the executive officer, which will later be expressed through attitude and behaviour towards the Europeanisation of the SME. Because SMEs managers have limited time and managing skills, ensuring they are provided specific skills is vital (Paunović & Prebežac, 2010). The list of challenges experienced internally include lack of entrepreneurial, managerial and marketing skills, bureaucracy and administrative burden, improper approach to information and knowledge, difficulties in obtaining financial resources or shortage of funds, poor accessibility to investment including technology equipment and know-how and standardisation discrepancies, lack of awareness of the importance of quality (Paunović & Prebežac, 2010).



The external barriers are obstacles that the SMEs face in an internationalisation process, such as environmental factors, language, etc. However, external barriers are different depending on the market SME is aiming to establish itself. Thus, the lack of knowledge of the market is one of the biggest challenges. The list of the external barriers includes differences in the range of product and service use, language barriers and cultural differences, risks of selling abroad, competition of indigenous companies, inappropriate behaviour of multinational companies against domestic companies, complicated trade documentation, including packaging and labelling, lack of government incentives for internationalisation and inadequate intellectual property protection (Paunović & Prebežac, 2010).

Therefore, internationalisation of SMEs is an expensive, time-consuming and exhausting process for small and medium-sized enterprises.

Innovation and opportunities for SMEs

The concept that innovation is essential for the modern economy and requires organisations to open to external markets has been confirmed by analysing 123,395 surveys of firms in 13 European countries (Martínez-Romána, Gamero, Delgado-González, & Tamayo, 2019). Furthermore, access to technological markets fosters internationalisation in local and national firms and reinforces their need to develop capacities to strengthen international expansion. The Annual Activity Report of the Director-General of DG GROW to the College of Commissioners (European Commission, 2020), demonstrated the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) about the use of digital technology and the access to international markets by SMEs. Based on the 2019 data, the indicator of the EU SMEs is 8.38%, and the target by 2024 is facilitating the growth. On 10 March 2020, the Commission adopted the SME Strategy to make it easier for SMEs to operate, scale up and expand, and competitive, resilient, and sustainable (European Commission, 2020).

Another initiative is the portal 'Tenders Electronic Daily' (TED), which electronically gives firms access to EU-wide business opportunities in public procurement. The benefits obtained by SMEs through online access to such information is crucial as they can establish their presence in the procurement in a cross-border context.

The European DIGITAL SME Alliance, the network of ICT SMEs in Europe, focuses on promoting exchanges of experiences, know-how and best practices in the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) sector. The Alliance has highlighted the need for digital skilled workers stating that according to Eurostat, 40% of companies trying to recruit ICT professionals (in the ICT sector and other sectors) reported difficulties in finding qualified workers (Pancorbo, 2018).

Challenges related to International Activities for SMOs

SMOs are small and medium-sized organisations from the non-profit sector (United Nations, 2003), falling into the third sector category. Third sector organisations, including SMOs, fulfil a set of functions or roles in society such as service provision, advocacy, community-building, and value maintenance



with nearly 13 per cent of the European workforce (Enjolras, Salamon, & Zimmer, 2018). Thus, the European third sector is an enormous economic force engaging an estimated 28.3 million full-time equivalent (FTE) workers in the EU (Lester & Sokolowski, 2018). Nevertheless, existing gaps in knowledge and awareness restrict SMOs to contribute to Europe's progress at its full potential.

Challenges

The studies show that SMOs in Europe are confronted with barriers related to finances, human resources, governance, or external relations. Some of the existing barriers are related to identity with no clear understanding across Europe about the essence and role of the SMOs, lack of specific operational objectives in the field of their activities, restricted channels of accessing and sharing the information, lack of data about the scale, scope and impact of the third sector and contribution to the European economy and society hindering them from operation and impact in Europe (Enjolras B. , 2017). An incomplete list of challenges SMOs are facing is elaborated on below.

Voluntariness. Nowadays, volunteers are engaged temporarily, and personal goals play a decisive role in taking up a volunteer job rather than committing to an organisation. Therefore, engagement in voluntary work in SMOs has become more flexible. Consequently, the recruitment of volunteers became one of the most severe difficulties related to human resource management and attracting citizens to take on positions of authority voluntarily is not easy (Enjolras, Salamon, & Zimmer, 2018).

Scarce resources and underfunding. Although government funding is still of significant importance, public funds are scaled back in the context of vast austerity measures (Enjolras B. , 2017). The diversification of financial resources carries the risks that managing SMOs becomes more demanding as accountability requirements of different funders have to be taken into account. Therefore, financial difficulties constitute a significant barrier and consequently a serious setback.

Bureaucracy. Bureaucracy and administrative burden seem to be one of the biggest challenges as it slows down performance and hinders effective and efficient management.

Visibility. SMOs' legitimacy and visibility in Europe are weak due to a lack of shared understanding of the nature of the third sector and recognition and institutionalisation into the statistical apparatus and policy-arena.

Innovation-led growth has been recognised as the way to more sustainable and equitable progress in the EU (Mazzucato, 2018), with organisations' missions being facilitators of the process. However, to accomplish the aim, missions should be constructed to encourage activity across and among multiple scientific disciplines, across different industrial sectors, and different types of actors. Hence, SMOs focusing on developing the principles of corporate governance and establishing themselves in the European and international arena is the first step to progress.



The upgrade2europe maturity model

- Elaboration on the importance of the four domains selected for the upgrade2europe project
- Maturity models are considered to be a relatively common tool, that can be used on the basis of self-assessment in order to help organisations employing them to understand and advance their current level of capability in a particular area in their organisation (OECD, 2021).

Maturity models are considered relevant and applicable to the target group of the project as they provide the step-by-step structure and guidance that can enable organisations of all sizes to advance from one maturity level to the next. Smaller entities usually lack the time or resources required to bring discipline in a specific area and advance from one level to the next, something that the upgrade2europe maturity model will provide.

It is further anticipated that the maturity model approach will not require additional resources from our target groups, where resources are scarce, in order to become familiar with and implement the model.

The consortium has selected four domains to include in the upgrade2europe maturity model.

Domains were carefully selected to cover the most crucial areas where organisations of all sizes and type function, from the corporate governance and leadership levels, where the vision and mission is articulated and where vision is transformed into results, to the levels where operations and resources are efficiently utilised and partnerships and project results are exploited.

Each of the four domains will enable the target group to become increasingly aware of the possibilities open to them by becoming engaged with their counterparts across Europe and beyond their national borders and sharing values and opportunities.

Furthermore, each step of the maturity model is aimed to support organisations to self-improve and achieve the maturity and the 'institutional readiness' required to "upgrade2europe".

The upgrade2europe approach is constructed on four domains that are divided into nine key process areas:

1. Corporate Governance – the foundations for success
 - 1.1. Mission, vision and organisational culture
 - 1.2. Strategy and assessment
 - 1.3. European and international dimension
2. Management and Leadership – getting it right
 - 2.1. Management excellence
 - 2.2. International activities and international project management
 - 2.3. Leadership excellence



3. People and Infrastructure
 - 3.1. People and infrastructure
 - 3.2. Financial capacity and financial management
4. European Partnerships and Alliances – Cooperation and Communication
 - 4.1. Cooperation and external communication

As the upgrade2europe is addressed to more mature organisations, the seven areas were combined into the four areas described below which are considered more applicable for the concept of the project and its target groups.

1. Corporate Governance - The foundations for success

According to the World Bank, "*Corporate Governance (CG) concerns the system by which companies are directed and controlled. It is about having companies, owners and regulators become more accountable, efficient and transparent, which in turn builds trust and confidence. Well-governed companies carry lower financial and non-financial risks and generate higher shareholder returns. They also have better access to external finance and reduce systemic risks due to corporate crises and financial scandals* (<https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/financialsector/brief/corporate-governance>)".

According to the above corporate governance definition, the importance of corporate governance for organisations of all sizes and all types is evident as "*accountability, efficiency, transparency and building trust and confidence*" are considered universally beneficial concepts that must be present in organisations.

However, a corporate governance definition developed under the framework of the GRC Essentials project, funded by the European Commission by the Erasmus + programme (2019-1-CY01-KA202-058375), "*The strategic and functional mindset and rules that allows organisations of all sizes, including SMEs and micro-enterprises, to operate efficiently and effectively and exceed the expectations of their stakeholders*", could be considered more applicable to the project's target groups. The GRC Essentials definition places the focus of corporate governance on specific issues with which organisations of all types and sizes can relate.

For the purposes of the "Maturity Model" developed under the framework of the upgrade2europe project, the Corporate Governance domain will define the capabilities required to enable internal and external stakeholders and where applicable, their representatives in Boards of Directors or Advisory Board members, to establish the foundations for a well-managed, healthy and sustainable entity.

The ability to articulate the vision, mission and strategic priorities, taking into consideration the business, competitive and social landscape and the needs of all stakeholders, is essential for organisations of all sizes. Since the emphasis of the upgrade2europe project is to integrate the European dimension in all business activities of the project's target group, the corporate governance



domain, the level where the strategic direction is elaborated and decided, is critical to support this view in order to orient the activities of the organisation in the specific direction.

The Corporate Governance domain of the "upgrade2europe maturity model" will emphasise in enabling organisations to make the upgrading to Europe thinking, part of the corporate DNA and the long-term strategic planning.

Making a clear distinction between governance and execution is often blurred, and at least in smaller organisations it might be more complex to make the separation. At the same time, it is essential for organisations to develop the state of mind that will allow them to distinguish, for example, the difference between setting a strategic goal while taking into consideration not only the profitability but the benefit of its internal and external stakeholders and society at large or developing a succession policy that will ensure the long-term success of the organisation.

The Corporate Governance domain will be composed of the following four sub-stages:

1.1) Mission, vision and organisation culture:

Will define the capabilities that the organisation must internally develop in order to focus its overall corporate culture and people mentality, towards growing and expanding the areas where they add value to their stakeholders, through European activities.

Being based on ethical values, vision and mission statements give a direction to the organisation. While vision is supposed to identify the long-term goals, mission statements tend to be more specific and help to determine prioritised activities (Bowen, 2018). The importance of having a vision is best described by Džupina, "Vision strengthens the belief in organisational steps, makes sense of work; explains the sense of movement trends of the business and its existence, can serve as an important decision-making criterion for day-to-day decisions, inspires and motivates people, supports the achievement of consensus and thus the achievement of organisation goals, serves as a control mechanism; it keeps the business in the desired movement trend" (Džupina, 2017).

Mission, vision and culture can enable organisations to think as Europeans first!

1.2) Strategy and assessment:

Will define the capabilities required to assess the competitive environment and develop a strategic view on the organisation's operations and allocate organisational resources not only to the short term and day to day needs and operations but in the long term, effectively pursuing the organisation's mission and vision emphasising in operating and growing across Europe.

1.3) European and international dimension:

Will define the capabilities required to monitor and assess the political and economic developments across and beyond Europe, to the extent required and allow an organisation to capitalise on the



opportunities provided. The activities under this stage will focus on aligning the organisation's strategy with European policies.

It is critical for organisations to not only share the political view for achieving European integration but also to be able to contribute in implementing the European vision, as this will be an enabler for organisations of all sizes and types to grow and add value to their stakeholders through European expansion.

2. Management and Leadership - Getting it right

Typically, management is considered to be associated with the leadership of people and the tasks that come along with this. These include but are not limited to planning, financial accounting, ensuring employees tasks are completed, making decisions, and organising the organisation and people in it (Donaires and Martinelli, 2019).

Leaders have an important role to play in promoting an effective corporate governance framework. They are the ones commissioned with the task to promote and share the long-term vision across the organisation, foster collaboration at all levels, promote efficiency and accountability while at the same time focusing on results and outcomes.

Given the fact that the main target groups of the project are educational institutions, small and medium sized organisations (SMO) and small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) operating in the service sector, the specific stage will become involved with the leadership capabilities at the executive level, meaning the capabilities required to translate an organisation's vision, defined at the corporate governance level, into reality and results at the execution level.

For the purposes of the project, we will consider executive level leadership as the activities involved with the culture and decision making required to support employees share and often shape the corporate vision with their unique competences, skills and knowledge. Leadership is additionally involved with engaging associates and stakeholders to contribute in achieving the organisation's strategic goals.

It is further noted that the upgrade2europe Capability Maturity Model will be mainly involved with the efforts of organisations to grow and add value to their stakeholders through European growth.

Regardless of the organisation's size, executive level leadership must focus in putting everything into the right context by aligning strategy with execution, delivering results and meeting internal and external stakeholders' expectations.

While the digital age has annihilated the traditional "hierarchical model" and brought to the surface the need for involvement and contribution from everyone, it has also facilitated this new operating era through the capabilities provided by technology. Today's leaders are not still responsible to develop an



inclusive and shared vision and establish an environment that will nurture accountability and shared execution.

The specific domain is composed of two substages:

2.1 Management Excellence:

The managerial practices is closely connected to the success of the organisation (Raisiene, 2014). The sub-stage is involved with all the capabilities related to managing and delivering results at the executive level, while promoting an inclusive and participative leadership and maintaining a strategic view on the organisation with an emphasis on growing through activities across Europe.

It is additionally involved with promoting internal communication and developing a learning organisation.

2.2 International activities and international project management:

The specific sub-stage is involved with the capabilities related to developing business relations and alliances with partners and stakeholders across Europe. It is additionally involved with communicating the results of the organisation's efforts and projects, both within as well outside the organisation and network of partners and associates.

As project management is a critical skill, the specific sub-stage will additionally define the capabilities required for the organisation to pursue strategic projects that will allow it to expand its activities and grow in Europe. This will include both European grants and research projects, as well as other business/professional activities.

Supporting organisations to look at the big picture by linking organisational projects to long-term strategic goals and objectives will also be part of this sub-stage.

2.3 Leadership excellence:

The specific sub-stage is involved with the capabilities related to enabling organisations to continuously change, innovate and make the decisions required in order to become more competitive and resilient, by adapting to market, competitive and technological forces.

Due to the increased interconnectivity and competition in markets, because of the speed at which technology operates as well as the ease with which outside competition can enter markets, the value of good leadership is higher than ever (Dinh et. al., 2013). Negative and toxic leadership are associated with higher disorganisation and employee turnover in organisations, as well as reduced information sharing and revenues. Positive leadership is associated with employees staying longer and making more money as an organisation.



Many leadership behaviors are tied to the values and morals of those in leadership positions. However, leadership traits are not unchangeable. Given training and feedback, leaders can learn how to enhance their leadership skills and increase employee happiness and performance in their organisations.

3. Operations & Resources - People, Infrastructure and Finances:

Operations management is generally involved with the ability of the organisation to transform inputs from its resources (personnel, material, technology etc.) into outputs, by developing specific products and services.

The specific domain will be involved with the foundations and infrastructure required to design the organisation's products and services, manage the delivery process and find ways to constantly improve and optimise operations.

The specific domain is composed of three sub-stages:

3.1 People and infrastructure:

A company's "employees" are no longer simply the head count that will ensure that all places in the production line are filled, although this is in some cases it is also critical, they are a company's most valuable resource, its ambassadors in the local and European society and the system that will deliver results.

Human resources, employees are very important for the success of small and new businesses as well as large businesses. Organisations must have an effective process for selecting and developing talent if the organisation succeeds. New firms should do their best to get competent, innovative personnel who are able to constantly change and improve the organisation (Orakwu and Iguisi, 2020).

This is more complex than it may seem in the smallest of organisations. According to Orakwu and Iguisi, "It involves planning for the number and quality of employees required under various job categories and making sure that staffing process such as acquiring, utilising, rewarding, promoting, developing, retaining, transferring and downsizing are effective" (Orakwu and Iguisi, 2020).

The specific substage expands beyond the traditional personnel management approach that focuses on developing employees, the most valuable resource of an organisation into defining the skills and competences that will support employees to become part of the organisational efforts to grow by capitalising on the opportunities provided by the European Union.

The stage is additionally involved with the foundational capabilities required to manage the organisation's infrastructure.

3.2 Financial capacity and financial management:



The specific sub-stage is involved with developing the capabilities required to not only sustaining the organisation but also financing its growth outside the national borders, capitalising on the opportunities provided by the European Union.

Businesses in the modern competitive environment must have an aspect of financial literacy, which means making effective decisions for the business through financial analysis and understanding (SMBCEO, 2010). To achieve success as a company, whether that is staying in business or growing as a company, it is imperative to understand how balance sheets, budgeting, and credit work (Trunk and Dermol, 2015).

4. European Partnerships & Alliances - Cooperation and Communication:

European Partnerships & Alliances is involved with supporting the organisation to develop the competences required to analyse the European business, economic and political and pro-actively create business opportunities.

The specific stage is focused in the following area:

4.1 Cooperation and external communication:

The specific sub-stage is involved with the change activities required to guide the organisation's activities and overall corporate presence (online and offline) towards European expansion.

It is additionally involved with analysing European developments and trends and building project consortia and evaluating the European activities undertaken.

Essentially the sub-stage will enable organisations to develop a bird's eye view on how to identify and capitalise on opportunities in Europe, in collaboration with their associates.

Supporting organisations capitalise on the opportunities in the long run by exploiting the results of successful projects and building system that will generate new opportunities in collaboration with European consortiums will also be covered.



Detail description of each level and how we advance from one level to another on the upgrade2europe maturity matrix

The four maturity levels for upgrade2europe have been defined as: Initial (Level 1), Repeatable (Level 2), Defined (Level 3) and Managed (Level 4). Four main domains have been identified. A total of nine key development areas were assigned to these four domains. This section describes in detail for each domain or key development area how organisations can move from one level to the next higher level.

Domain 1: Corporate Governance - The foundations for success; Key Process Area 1.1: Mission, vision and organisational culture

1.1.1 Mission (purpose of the organisation) and vision (its plans for achievement and development) as guiding principles for the organisation in Europe

At Level 1 an organisation has no mission or vision for the area of upgrade2europe. If a mission or a vision exists, then it is not linked to the international activities of the organisation within Europe. At Level 2 an organisation has a mission or a vision which is linked only partly to the international activities within Europe. This connection has not yet been sufficiently addressed. At Level 3 an organisation has a mission and a vision, both of which are linked in a significant way to their international activities within Europe. A considerable proportion of the organisations staff support the international elements of their mission and vision. Advancing to Level 4 an organisation has a mission and a vision, both of which are linked in a comprehensive way to their international activities within Europe. The majority of the organisations staff support the international elements of their mission and vision.

1.1.2 Shared European beliefs and values

At Level 1 the organisation is not aware of any shared European beliefs and values. At Level 2 a small proportion of those involved in the organisation are aware of shared European beliefs and values. At Level 3 a significant proportion of those involved in the organisation are aware of shared European beliefs and values. These provide a sense of European identity in the organisation. Advancing to Level 4 almost all of those involved in the organisation are aware of shared European beliefs and values. These provide a sense of European identity in the organisation and give direction to its activities.

1.1.3 Willingness of the organisation to react to changes within the European environment (e.g. changes in policies, legislation, strategies, programmes)



At Level 1 the organisation does not react to any changes within the European environment. At Level 2 the organisation sporadically reacts to changes within the European environment. Advancing to Level 3 the organisation increasingly reacts to changes within the European environment and uses them partially to its advantage. At Level 4 the organisation systematically reacts to changes within the European environment and uses them to a large extent to its advantage.

Domain 1: Corporate Governance - The foundations for success;

Key Process Area 1.2: Strategy and assessment

1.2.1 European content within the organisation's strategy

At Level 1 the organisation does not have a strategy. If it has a strategy, then this does not include any European content. At Level 2 the strategy of the organisation contains European content. This content bears little relation, however, to the mission or vision of the organisation. Upgrading to Level 3 the strategy of the organisation contains European content. This content bears recognisable relation to the mission and vision of the organisation. A significant proportion of those involved in the organisation are aware of the European content within its strategy and increasingly implement it during international activities. Moving to Level 4 the strategy of the organisation contains European content. This content bears substantial relation to the mission and vision of the organisation. Almost all of those involved in the organisation are aware of the European content within its strategy and consistently implement it during their international activities.

1.2.2 Strategic analysis of European developments and trends

At Level 1 the organisation does not analyse any European developments or trends. At Level 2 the organisation sporadically analyses European developments and trends. It does not develop its own European strategies based on this analysis. At Level 3 the organisation increasingly analyses European developments and trends. It develops its own European strategies based on this analysis. These strategies are, however, primarily developed by managerial staff. They affect only certain areas of the organisation. At Level 4 the organisation systematically analyses European developments and trends. It develops its own European strategies based on this analysis. These strategies are collaboratively developed by managerial and key members of staff. They affect all areas of the organisation.

1.2.3 Comparing organisational performance with good practices in Europe (Benchmarking)

At Level 1 the organisation does not attempt to compare its activities or results with other organisations and good practices. If comparison does take place, then it is not for its European activities or their



results. Moving to Level 2 the organisation attempts to a small extent to compare its European activities and their results with other European organisations and good practices. At Level 3 the organisation attempts increasingly to compare its European activities and their results with other European organisations and good practices. These efforts stem primarily from members of the managerial staff and affect only certain areas of the organisation. At Level 4 the organisation attempts systematically to compare comprehensively its European activities and their results with other European organisations and good practices. These efforts stem from employees and managerial staff, and are an important part of the organisational culture. They affect all areas of the organisation.

1.2.4 Evaluate European activities

At Level 1 the organisation has no predefined targets and does not assess its own activities. If it has predefined targets which it assesses, then they are not for the international activities. At Level 2 the organisation has determined targets and indicators to review whether these targets are met for some international activities. It assesses these international activities to a limited extent. At Level 3 the organisation has determined targets and indicators to review whether these targets are met for a significant proportion of international activities. It increasingly assesses these international activities and learns from them for the future. At Level 4 the organisation has determined targets and indicators to review whether these targets are met for almost all international activities. It systematically assesses these international activities and learns from them for the future.

1.2.5 Recognising the successes that the organisation has achieved through European activities

At Level 1 those involved in the organisation hardly appreciate its successes at all. If there is appreciation, then it is not for the successes of its European activities. At Level 2 a small proportion of those involved in the organisation appreciate the successes of its European activities and recognise the benefit for the organisation. At Level 3 a significant proportion of those involved in the organisation appreciate the successes of its European activities and recognise the benefit for the organisation. At Level 4 almost all of those involved in the organisation appreciate the successes of its European activities and recognise the benefit for the organisation.

Domain 1: Corporate Governance - The foundations for success

Key Process Area 1.3 – European and international dimension

1.3.1 EU policies



At Level 1 the organisation has no knowledge of the EU policies pertinent to it. If it has knowledge about them, then it does not exploit or use this. Upgrading to Level 2 the organisation has basic knowledge of the EU-policies pertinent to it. It is able to exploit this knowledge and use it to the advantage of the organisation to a basic extent. At Level 3 the organisation has satisfactory knowledge of the EU policies pertinent to it. It is increasingly able to exploit this knowledge and use it to the advantage of the organisation. On the next Level 4 the organisation has expert knowledge of the EU policies pertinent to it. It is comprehensively able to exploit this knowledge and use it to the advantage of the organisation.

1.3.2 Global policies

At Level 1 the organisation has no knowledge of the global policies pertinent to it. If it has knowledge about them, then it does not exploit or use this. At Level 2 the organisation has basic knowledge of the global policies pertinent to it. It is able to exploit this knowledge and use it to the advantage of the organisation to a basic extent. At Level 3 the organisation has satisfactory knowledge of the global policies pertinent to it. It is increasingly able to exploit this knowledge and use it to the advantage of the organisation. At Level 4 the organisation has expert knowledge of the global policies pertinent to it. It is comprehensively able to exploit this knowledge and use it to the advantage of the organisation.

1.3.3 Relevance of the European Green Deal

At Level 1 the organisation has no knowledge of the European Green Deal. If it has knowledge about this, then it does not exploit or use it. At Level 2 the organisation has basic knowledge of the European Green Deal. It is able to exploit this knowledge and use it to the advantage of the organisation to a basic extent. At Level 3 the organisation has satisfactory knowledge of the European Green Deal. It is increasingly able to exploit this knowledge and use it to the advantage of the organisation. Moving up to Level 4 the organisation has expert knowledge of the European Green Deal. It is comprehensively able to exploit this knowledge and use it to the advantage of the organisation.

1.3.4 European and global standards and norms (e.g. European Pillar of Social Rights, ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance), International Standards Organization (ISO))

At Level 1 in the organisation, it has no knowledge of European and international standards and norms that are pertinent to it. If it has knowledge about them, then it does not use it. At Level 2 in the organisation, it has basic knowledge of European and international standards and norms that are pertinent to it. It uses this knowledge to a limited extent. At Level 3 in the organisation, it has well-grounded knowledge of European and international standards and norms that are pertinent to it. It



increasingly uses this knowledge. At Level 4 in the organisation, it has expert knowledge of European and international standards and norms that are pertinent to it. It continually uses this knowledge.

1.3.5 Products and services for the European market

At Level 1 the organisation does not offer any products or services beyond the national market on the European market. At Level 2 the organisation offers products or services beyond the national market on the European market to a limited extent. From time to time it develops new products or services for the European market or further develops its existing offers. At Level 3 the organisation offers products or services beyond the national market on the European market to a significant extent. More and more frequently it develops new products or services for the European market or further develops its existing offers. At Level 4 the organisation offers products or services beyond the national market on the European market to a very large extent. It regularly develops new products or services for the European market or further develops its existing offers.

Domain 2: Management and Leadership - Getting it right;

Key Process Area 2.1: Management Excellence

2.1.1 Quality management

At Level 1 an organisation does not have quality assurance. If it does have quality assurance, then it is not used in the area of their international activities. Moving to Level 2 an organisation still does not have a system for the quality assurance of international activities. But it uses, however, various instruments for quality assurance for their international activities (e.g. checklists, minutes of working sessions, surveys of participants or clients). At Level 3 an organisation has an adequate system for the quality assurance of international activities which is oriented around national or international standards. It increasingly uses this system for their international activities and thereby achieves qualitatively good outputs. At Level 4 an organisation has a comprehensive system for the quality assurance of international activities which is oriented around national or international standards. It continually uses this system for international activities and thereby achieves qualitatively very good outputs.

2.1.2 Risk management

At Level 1 the organisation does not use formal processes to identify and manage risks. If it uses formal processes, then these do not extend to its international activities. At Level 2 the organisation uses formal processes in some instances to identify and manage the risks of international activities. At Level



3 the organisation increasingly uses formal processes to identify and manage the risks of international activities. It is thereby increasingly able to adequately deal with risks. Moving to Level 4 the organisation systematically uses formal processes to identify and manage the risks of international activities. It is thereby almost always able to adequately deal with risks.

2.1.3 Needs of European target groups (customer and target group orientation)

At Level 1 the organisation has no knowledge about the needs of its potential European target groups or it has not yet worked for European target groups. At Level 2 it has limited knowledge about the needs of its European target groups and can partially satisfy them. At Level 3 it has solid knowledge about the needs of its European target groups and can adequately satisfy them. From time to time it develops new offers for these target groups. At Level 4 it has extensive knowledge about the needs of its European target groups and can comprehensively satisfy them. It is continually developing new offers for these target groups.

2.1.4 Internal communication

At Level 1 the organisation does not have an internal communications management. If it has internal communications management, then it does not extend to its international activities. At Level 2 the organisation has a rudimentary internal communications management for international activities. It has not introduced any formal processes to guarantee the internal exchange of information. Upgrading to Level 3 the organisation has a satisfactory internal communications management for international activities. It has introduced formal processes to guarantee the internal exchange of information. At Level 4 the organisation has a comprehensive internal communications management for international activities. It has introduced effective processes to guarantee the constant and trouble-free internal exchange of information.

2.1.5 Learning within the organisation ('lessons learned')

At Level 1 in the organisation, it has no formal learning process ('lessons learned'). If there is a formal learning process, then it does not affect international activities. At Level 2 in the organisation, it learns to some extent from its international experiences. The internal dissemination of these learning experiences ('lessons learned') is coordinated to a limited extent. At Level 3 in the organisation, it learns increasingly from its international experiences. The internal dissemination of these learning experiences ('lessons learned') is adequately coordinated. The application of the 'lessons learned' increases the efficiency and effectiveness of its international activities. At Level 4 in the organisation, it learns systematically from its international experiences. The internal dissemination of these learning



experiences ('lessons learned') is comprehensively coordinated. The application of the 'lessons learned' increases the efficiency and effectiveness of its international activities to a large extent.

2.1.6 Knowledge Management

At Level 1 the organisation does not have a knowledge management. If it has knowledge management, then it does not extend to its international activities. At Level 2 the organisation has a rudimentary knowledge management for international activities. It has not introduced any formal processes to guarantee the use of its knowledge. At Level 3 the organisation has a satisfactory knowledge management for international activities. It has introduced formal processes to guarantee the use of its knowledge. At Level 4 the organisation has a comprehensive knowledge management for international activities. It has introduced effective processes to guarantee the constant and efficient use of its knowledge.

2.1.7 Legal issues (e.g. contracts with foreign organisations, intellectual property, copyright law, data protection)

At Level 1 in the organisation there is no awareness of how to deal with legal issues. If it does have such an awareness, then not for the legal issues of its international activities. At Level 2 in the organisation there is an elementary awareness of how to deal with the legal issues that arise in the context of its international activities. It does not, however, proactively identify these legal issues and it normally acts first when it is confronted with legal issues within the parameters of its international activities. At Level 3 in the organisation there is a noticeable awareness of how to deal with the legal issues that arise in the context of its international activities. It identifies these legal issues increasingly proactively and is gradually professionalising its process of cooperation with its external legal advisers. On the next Level 4 in the organisation there is a distinct awareness of how to deal with the legal issues that arise in the context of its international activities. It identifies these legal issues systematically and uses its established process of cooperation with its external legal advisers.

Domain 2: Management and Leadership - Getting it right

Key Process Area 2.2: International activities and international project management

2.2.1 Application of internationally recognised project management methods (e.g. IPMA Competence Baseline, PMBOK, PRINCE2, ISO 21500, PM2, PCM/LFA, Scrum)

At Level 1 the organisation uses neither project management tools nor an internationally recognised project management methodology. If it uses tools and a methodology, then this use does not extend



to its international projects. At Level 2 the organisation does not use an internationally recognised project management methodology for international projects. It does, however, use a selected set of project management tools (e.g. Gantt charts, work packages planning). Its projects are managed differently. At Level 3 the organisation increasingly uses project management tools and an internationally recognised project management methodology for its international projects. A significant proportion of its staff and management team are able to make use of both the tools and the methodology. At Level 4 the organisation systematically uses project management tools and an internationally recognised project management methodology for its international projects. All key members of its staff and management team are able to make use of both the tools and the methodology.

2.2.2 Experience of international activities or projects

At Level 1 the organisation does not have any experience of international activities or projects. At Level 2 the organisation has limited experience of international activities or projects. Other foreign organisations involve it occasionally in their international activities or projects. At Level 3 the organisation has significant experience of international activities or projects. Other foreign organisations involve it more and more frequently in their international activities or projects. It increasingly initiates its own international activities or projects which it then implements. Moving to Level 4 the organisation has extensive experience of international activities or projects. Other foreign organisations involve it regularly in their international activities or projects. It continually initiates its own international activities or projects which it then implements.

2.2.3 Knowledge of EU-funding programmes, EU-project development and EU-project implementation

At Level 1 the organisation is not able to develop, apply for or implement EU projects in accordance with the requirements for project application and implementation. At Level 2 it is in part able to develop, apply for and implement EU projects in accordance with the requirements for project application and implementation. It overcomes the challenges or makes use of the opportunities which emerge during project implementation to a limited extent. At Level 3 it is increasingly able to develop, apply for and implement EU projects in accordance with the requirements for project application and implementation. It overcomes the challenges or makes use of the opportunities which emerge during project implementation to a satisfactory extent. At Level 4 it develops, applies for and regularly implements EU projects in accordance with the requirements for project application and implementation. It overcomes the challenges or makes use of the opportunities which emerge during project implementation to a large extent.



2.2.4 Communication and coordination of those involved internally and externally in activities and projects

At Level 1 the organisation does not coordinate cooperation or organise communication between those involved internally and externally. If cooperation is coordinated and communication organised, then this does not affect its international activities or projects. At Level 2 the organisation only partly coordinates cooperation and organises communication between those involved internally and externally when it comes to international activities or projects. Because of this, it is less effective at implementing its international activities or projects. At Level 3 the organisation increasingly coordinates cooperation and organises communication between those involved internally and externally when it comes to international activities or projects. Because of this, it is more effective at implementing its international activities or projects. At Level 4 the organisation systematically coordinates cooperation and organises communication between those internally and externally involved when it comes to international activities or projects. Because of this, it is extremely effective at implementing its international activities or projects.

2.2.5 Exploitation of the results of activities and projects (sustainability)

At Level 1 the organisation does not exploit the results of its activities or projects. If it exploits results, then not the results which it achieves within its international activities or projects. At Level 2 the organisation in part exploits the results of its international activities or projects. The contribution to its strategic goals is limited. At Level 3 the organisation increasingly exploits the results of its international activities or projects. The contribution to its strategic goals is appreciable. At Level 4 the organisation systematically exploits the results of its international activities or projects. The contribution to its strategic goals is substantial.

Domain 2: Management and Leadership - Getting it right

Key Process Area 2.3: Leadership Excellence

2.3.1 Leading change processes for the Europeanisation of an organisation (Change Management)

At Level 1 the management staff is not able to lead the necessary change processes for the Europeanisation of the organisation or a change process for the Europeanisation of the organisation has not yet begun. At Level 2 the management staff is to some extent able to lead the necessary change processes for the Europeanisation of the organisation. One indicator of this is that a limited proportion of those involved in the organisation are convinced of its European activities. At Level 3 the management staff is increasingly able to lead the necessary change processes for the Europeanisation



of the organisation. One indicator of this is that a substantial proportion of those involved in the organisation are convinced of its Europeanisation strategy. At Level 4 the management staff is comprehensively able to lead the necessary change processes for the Europeanisation of the organisation. One indicator of this is that almost all of those involved in the organisation are convinced of its Europeanisation strategy.

2.3.2 Digital Transformation

At Level 1 the management staff is not able to lead the necessary steps for the digital transformation of the organisation or a digital transformation process of the organisation has not yet begun. At Level 2 the management staff is to some extent able to lead the necessary steps for the digital transformation of the organisation. One indicator of this is that a limited proportion of those involved in the organisation are already aware of and able to assess the technological developments that are changing the world (e.g. Big Data, Blockchain or AI). At Level 3 the management staff is increasingly able to lead the necessary steps for the digital transformation of the organisation. One indicator of this is that a substantial proportion of those involved in the organisation are already aware of and able to assess the technological developments that are changing the world (e.g. Big Data, Blockchain or AI). At Level 4 the management staff is comprehensively able to lead the necessary steps for the digital transformation of the organisation. One indicator of this is that almost all of those involved in the organisation are already aware of and able to assess the technological developments that are changing the world (e.g. Big Data, Blockchain or AI).

2.3.3 Agility, self-organisation and appropriate decision-making processes

At Level 1 in the organisation, it does not act flexible, proactive, anticipatory or proactive to introduce necessary changes. If it acts in an agile way, then these activities do not extend to its international activities. At Level 2 the organisation uses agile processes in some instances to introduce necessary changes to its international activities. One indicator of this is that a limited proportion of those involved in the organisation are already familiar with the topics of self-organisation and participatory decision-making processes (e.g. ConsentT method or consultative individual decision) and use corresponding methods. At Level 3 the organisation increasingly uses agile processes to introduce necessary changes to its international activities. One indicator of this is that a substantial proportion of those involved in the organisation are already familiar with the topics of self-organisation and participatory decision-making processes (e.g. ConsentT method or consultative individual decision) and use corresponding methods. At Level 4 the organisation comprehensively uses agile processes to introduce necessary changes to its international activities. One indicator of this is that almost all of those involved in the



organisation are already familiar with the topics of self-organisation and participatory decision-making processes (e.g. ConsenT method or consultative individual decision) and use corresponding methods.

2.3.4 Opportunity management

At Level 1 the organisation does not use formal processes to identify and capitalise on opportunities. If it uses formal processes, then these do not extend to its international activities. At Level 2 the organisation uses formal processes in some instances to identify and capitalise on opportunities regarding international activities. At Level 3 the organisation increasingly uses formal processes to identify and capitalise on opportunities regarding international activities. It is thereby increasingly benefiting from these opportunities. At Level 4 the organisation systematically uses formal processes to identify and capitalise on opportunities regarding international activities. It is thereby almost always benefiting from these opportunities.

2.3.5 Innovation strategy and innovation management

At Level 1 there is neither an innovation strategy nor an innovation management in place in the organisation for the development of new products, services and processes. If an innovation strategy and innovation management are in place, then it does not develop any products, services or processes for its international activities based on them. On the next Level 2 an innovation strategy and innovation management for international activities are in place to a basic extent in the organisation. New products, services and processes are mostly developed on an ad hoc basis by individual people or small groups from the organisation. At Level 3 the innovation strategy and innovation management for international activities are satisfactorily implemented in the organisation. It is on this foundation that new products, services and processes are increasingly developed systematically by the pertinent people involved in the organisation. The international innovation activities increase its competitiveness and contribute more and more frequently to the success of the organisation. At Level 4 the innovation strategy and innovation management for international activities are comprehensively implemented in the organisation. It is on this foundation that new products, services and processes are developed systematically by the pertinent people involved in the organisation. The international innovation activities increase the competitiveness and contribute considerably to the success of the organisation.

Domain 3: Operations & Resources - People, Infrastructure and Finances;

Key Process Area 3.1: People and Infrastructure

3.1.1 Personnel management strategy for international activities



At Level 1 an organisation has no personnel management strategy. If it has a personnel management strategy, then it does not extend to the improvement of competencies for international work. On the next Level 2 an organisation has a basic personnel management strategy to improve competencies for international work. It has already occasionally identified staff in regard to their ability to work internationally. At Level 3 an organisation has a solid personnel management strategy to improve competencies for international work. Its personnel development strategy increasingly incorporates the European elements in their mission, vision and their strategic goals. The organisation has already identified, trained or hired staff in regard to their ability to work internationally. Moving up to Level 4 an organisation has a very good long-term personnel strategy to improve competencies for international work. Its personnel development strategy systematically incorporates the European elements of their mission, vision and their strategic goals. The organisation is able to fill even short-term positions in the area of international work with suitable staff, whether internal or external.

3.1.2 Availability of staff with the skills, knowledge and competencies for international work (e.g. language skills, intercultural competence, digital skills)

At Level 1 the staff are scarcely equipped with the necessary skills, knowledge and competencies for international work. At Level 2 a limited proportion of the staff are equipped with the necessary skills, knowledge and competencies for international work. Specific knowledge and skills are present in rudimentary form: e.g. language skills (especially English), intercultural competence, digital skills. At Level 3 a significant proportion of the staff are equipped with the necessary skills, knowledge and competencies for international work. Specific skills are mainly present: e.g. language skills (especially English), intercultural competence, digital skills. Corresponding positions are in most cases satisfactorily filled. At Level 4 the majority of the staff are equipped with the necessary skills, knowledge and competencies for international work. Specific skills are almost completely present: e.g. language skills (especially English), intercultural competence, digital skills. Corresponding positions are almost always satisfactorily filled.

3.1.3 Developing skills, knowledge and competencies for international work (e.g. seminars, on the job learning, international mobilities)

At Level 1 the skills, knowledge and competencies of the staff are not developed. If the organisation implements personnel development measures, then these do not extend to international work. At Level 2 the skills, knowledge and competencies of the staff for international work are developed to a limited extent. The organisation identifies the need for training on a case-by-case basis and facilitates corresponding training or learning opportunities in individual instances. At Level 3 the skills, knowledge



and competencies of the staff for international work are increasingly developed. The organisation regularly identifies the need for training and facilitates corresponding training or learning opportunities to a significant extent. The personnel development measures are consistent with the personnel development strategy. At Level 4 the skills, knowledge and competencies of the staff for international work are systematically developed. The organisation comprehensively identifies the need for training and facilitates corresponding training or learning opportunities to a considerable extent. The personnel development measures systematically implement the personnel development strategy.

3.1.4 The management team's experiences of learning and working within Europe

At Level 1 the management team has no experience of learning or working internationally. They are not aware of the challenges and opportunities which arise within international activities. At Level 2 the management team has some experience of learning and working internationally. They are aware of the challenges and opportunities which arise within international activities to some extent. When challenges or opportunities occur, the management team overcomes or seizes them to the best of their knowledge. At Level 3 the management team has solid experience of learning and working internationally. They are aware of the challenges and opportunities which arise within international activities in many cases. The management team overcomes or seizes them in an appropriate manner. Moving up to Level 4 the management team has excellent experience of learning and working internationally. They are aware of the challenges and opportunities which arise within international activities to a large extent. The management team overcomes or seizes them with great confidence.

3.1.5 The staff's experiences of learning and working within Europe

At Level 1 the staff have no experience of learning or working internationally. They are not aware of the challenges and opportunities which arise within international activities. At Level 2 the staff have some experience of learning and working internationally. They are aware of the challenges and opportunities which arise within international activities to some extent. When these challenges or opportunities occur, the staff overcome or seize them to the best of their knowledge. On the next Level 3 the staff have solid experience of learning and working internationally. They are aware of the challenges and opportunities which arise within international activities in many cases. The staff overcome or seize them in an appropriate manner. At Level 4 the staff have excellent experience of learning and working internationally. They are aware of the challenges and opportunities which arise within international activities to a large extent. The staff overcome or seize them with great confidence.

3.1.6 Infrastructure (e.g. premises, equipment, fast internet connection, hardware, software, remote work)



At Level 1 the physical and technological infrastructures are not sufficient for the demands of international work. At Level 2 the physical and technological infrastructures are partially sufficient for the demands of international work. This infrastructure is limited and enables efficient procedure to a restricted extent. At Level 3 the physical and technological infrastructures are in essence sufficient for the demands of international work. This infrastructure is solid and enables efficient procedure. The organisation is equipped with the current technical and infrastructural standard, e.g. fast internet, necessary hardware and software. At Level 4 the physical and technological infrastructures are completely sufficient for the demands of international work. This infrastructure is at a high level and enables highly efficient procedure. The organisation is equipped beyond the current standard, e.g. with the newest technology in the areas of conference software or project management.

Domain 3: Operations & Resources - People, Infrastructure and Finances

Key Process Area 3.2: Financial Capacity and Financial Management

3.2.1 Financial planning of international activities

At Level 1 in the organisation, no financial planning for international activities takes place. At Level 2 in the organisation, it plans the finances for international activities in the short term. It decides about finances for international activities on an ad hoc basis and dependent on the opportunities that arise. At Level 3 in the organisation, it plans the finances for international activities in the middle term. Financial planning of the international activities takes into account the strategic goals in many cases. At Level 4 in the organisation, it plans the finances for international activities in the long term. Financial planning of the international activities consequently takes into account the strategic goals.

3.2.2 Ability of the organisation to finance international activities independently

At Level 1 the organisation is not equipped with a budget with which it can finance international activities with its own resources. At Level 2 the organisation is equipped with a limited budget with which it can finance international activities with its own resources. The international activities are therefore strongly dependent on external funding and financing. At Level 3 the organisation is equipped with a considerable budget with which it can finance international activities with its own resources. The international activities are therefore only partially dependent on external funding or financing. At Level 4 the organisation is equipped with a comprehensive budget with which it can finance international activities with its own resources. The international activities can therefore be implemented as far as possible independently of external funding or financing.



3.2.3 Successful EU-Fundraising (funding e.g. through Erasmus+, Horizon Europe)

At Level 1 the organisation has not yet carried out any EU-funded international activities or projects. At Level 2 the organisation occasionally carries out EU-funded international activities or projects. It is equipped with basic knowledge about EU fundraising. It receives a comparatively small amount of funding. At Level 3 the organisation increasingly carries out EU-funded international activities or projects. It is equipped with solid knowledge about EU fundraising. It receives an appreciable amount of funding. At Level 4 the organisation continually carries out EU-funded international activities or projects. It is equipped with very good knowledge about EU fundraising. It receives a significant amount of funding.

3.2.4 Fundraising and financing from other sources (national, regional, World Bank, OECD, donations, banks, etc.)

At Level 1 the organisation has not yet carried out any international activities or projects funded from other sources. At Level 2 the organisation occasionally carries out international activities or projects funded from other sources. It is equipped with basic knowledge to work with these funding sources. It receives a comparatively small amount of funding. At Level 3 the organisation increasingly carries out international activities or projects funded from other sources. It is equipped with solid knowledge to work with these funding sources. It receives an appreciable amount of funding. At Level 4 the organisation continually carries out international activities or projects funded from other sources. It is equipped with very good knowledge to work with these funding sources. It receives a significant amount of funding.

3.2.5 Financial accounting for international activities

At Level 1 the organisation has no experience of financial accounting for international activities. At Level 2 the organisation has little experience of financial accounting for international activities. The financial team has limited knowledge of the principles of international accountancy (e.g. dealing with value-added tax and invoicing in an international context, proof of expenditure for European or international funders). At Level 3 the organisation has well-grounded experience of financial accounting for international activities. The financial team has resilient knowledge of the principles of international accountancy (e.g. dealing with value-added tax and invoicing in an international context, proof of expenditure for European or international funders). At Level 4 the organisation has extensive experience of financial accounting for international activities. The financial team has comprehensive knowledge of the principles of international accountancy (e.g. dealing with value-added tax and invoicing in an international context, proof of expenditure for European or international funders).



Domain 4: European Partnerships & Alliances - Cooperation and Communication;
Key Process Area 4.1: Cooperation and external Communication

4.1.1 European networking and cooperation

At Level 1 an organisation does not take part in exchange within international networks. It does not cooperate with organisations in other European countries. At Level 2 an organisation takes part to a limited extent in exchange within international networks. It cooperates irregularly with organisations in other European countries. On the next Level 3 an organisation increasingly takes part in exchange within international networks. It cooperates more and more frequently with organisations in other European countries. The organisation is known within its sector beyond its national borders. At Level 4 an organisation takes part in international networks to a large extent. It continually cooperates with organisations in other European countries. The organisation is known within its sector throughout all of Europe.

4.1.2 Building EU-project consortia or initiate new collaborations

At Level 1 the organisation has had no experiences of building EU project consortia or initiating new collaborations. At Level 2 the organisation has had limited experiences of building EU project consortia or initiating new collaborations. It is able to find reliable partners for EU projects or for other ways of working with foreign partners to a limited extent. At Level 3 the organisation has had solid experiences of building EU project consortia or initiating new collaborations. It is mostly able to find reliable partners for EU projects or for other ways of working with foreign partners. In doing so, it usually bears in mind the country of origin, expertise and legal structure of its future partners. At Level 4 the organisation has had comprehensive experiences of building EU project consortia or initiating new collaborations. It is consistently able to find reliable partners for EU projects or for other ways of working with foreign partners. In doing so, it purposefully bears in mind the country of origin, expertise and legal structure of its future partners.

4.1.3 European online presence (e.g. website, social media)

At Level 1 the online presence (e.g. website, social media) addresses exclusively national target groups. At Level 2 the online presence (e.g. website, social media) also addresses European target groups to a small degree. Online information is available in the native language and to a limited extent in a further language, such as English. At Level 3 the online presence (e.g. website and social media) increasingly also addresses European target groups. Online information is available in the native language and a



substantial part is also available in a further language, such as English. The organisation plans its European online communications activities and implement these. At Level 4 the online presence (e.g. website and social media) also addresses European target groups to a large extent. Online information is available in the native language and in at least one further language, such as English. The organisation is equipped with a European online communications strategy which it systematically implements.

4.1.4 Communicating international activities on a local, regional, national and European or international level

At Level 1 the organisation does not carry out any international activities. If it carries out international activities, then it does not communicate them on a local, regional, national and European or international level. At Level 2 it only communicates its international activities on a local, regional, national and European or international level to a small degree. Its target groups are therefore only aware of the international activities and their results to a limited extent, e.g. through media reports or awards. At Level 3 it increasingly communicates its international activities on a local, regional, national and European or international level. Its target groups are therefore more and more frequently aware of the international activities and their results, e.g. through media reports or awards. This noticeably increases the prominence and appeal. At Level 4 it continually communicates its international activities on a local, regional, national and European or international level. Its target groups are therefore regularly aware of the international activities and their results, e.g. through media reports or awards. This increases the prominence and appeal to a large extent.

- How to upgrade2europe? What can we learn from Chance Management, Organisational Development Theory, and agile management approaches?
- How to use the upgrade2europe maturity matrix in practise? – developing the needed capabilities

The upgrade2europe maturity process model at a glance

- graphical visualisation => 4 “steps”/“levels”

Conclusion



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