



Twin-Safe: Advancing Road Safety Through Twinning

Summary of Deliverable 5.2

# **FTTS civic mission, strategy and objectives**

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## Summary

Universities are increasingly recognized not only as centers of education and research but also as key contributors to civic engagement and community development. The concept of the Civic University reflects the idea that higher education institutions carry a responsibility to use their knowledge, resources and influence for the public good. By moving beyond their traditional roles of teaching and research, universities can play an active part in addressing societal challenges, promoting sustainable development, strengthening innovation and advancing social justice within both local and global contexts. To support this vision, the Civic Mission Framework provides a structure for universities to assess and strengthen their civic role. It encourages institutions to gather evidence of their activities, reflect on their community impact and develop locally relevant strategies and indicators. The framework helps universities celebrate their achievements, map their civic engagement comprehensively and pursue continuous improvement through collaboration and reflection. It identifies seven key domains of civic commitment: 1) social impact, 2) environment, climate and biodiversity, 3) health and wellbeing, 4) cultural contribution, 5) economic impact, 6) estates, facilities and placemaking, 7) institutional strategy and leadership. It also identifies six phases of progress shaped as a cyclical and iterative process, in which the learning then informs further reviews and development.

University of Zagreb Faculty of Transport and Traffic Sciences (FTTS), established in 1984, has a longstanding tradition of addressing societal needs and contributing to community development. Through the TWIN-SAFE project and this deliverable, FTTS articulates its own civic mission, guided by the principles of sustainability, inclusivity and societal impact. This initiative will enhance the faculty's contribution to Croatian society and strengthen its engagement in European and global sustainable development efforts.

To support FTTS in developing its civic mission, examples of successful implementation of the civic university concept are presented: Hasselt University in Belgium, universities in Wales and the University of Groningen in the Netherlands.

1. Hasselt University applies a civic framework with six impact areas and four activity domains, linking education, research and outreach to regional and global challenges through inclusive, sustainable and socially impactful initiatives.
2. Universities in Wales have jointly adopted a national Civic Mission Framework derived from the Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015), focusing on leadership, education, citizenship, enterprise and global responsibility, all guided by principles of long-term sustainability and collaboration.
3. The University of Groningen integrates civic engagement into its legal and strategic mission, working closely with government and industry to address social, economic and environmental challenges while fostering innovation and entrepreneurship.

The development of the civic mission for FTTS within the TWIN-SAFE project was carried out through a series of three workshops with Hasselt University - one held in person and two online. The process explored how FTTS contributes to its community and how the civic university concept could be applied within its institutional context. These workshops provided the foundation for defining FTTS's civic mission, strategy and performance indicators.

- The first workshop, held in Hasselt on October 31st, 2024, introduced the civic university principles and demonstrated how HU applies them in practice. FTTS participants worked in three groups to map the faculty's existing activities related to estates and placemaking, economic impact and social impact. In terms of estates and placemaking, the Borongaj Campus emerged as the main site for community engagement through events such as

Career Day, Open-Door Days and safety training sessions organized by local associations. However, the activities currently lack a structured strategy and the faculty aims to develop a more coordinated approach that also includes outreach to vulnerable groups. The analysis of economic impact revealed strong collaboration with industry partners, including the co-design of new undergraduate programs and participation in applied research and commercial projects. Through initiatives such as the development of Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans for Croatian municipalities, FTTS contributes to regional economic growth, improved accessibility and sustainable transport solutions. Socially, the faculty's projects demonstrate a growing commitment to inclusive mobility, employing technologies such as virtual reality and drones to enhance accessibility and safety for all citizens, including people with disabilities.

- Second workshop, held online on July 28th, 2025, focused on refining the scope and regional relevance of FTTS's civic mission. Discussions centered on identifying current civic-oriented activities and assessing how they could be strategically integrated into a comprehensive mission and strategy. Drawing on European examples, participants emphasized the importance of defining clear objectives, strengthening stakeholder engagement and establishing measurable yet flexible Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).
- The third workshop, conducted online on September 11th, 2025, addressed the practical implementation of the civic mission and the development of KPIs. HU representatives shared their experience in integrating civic principles into university management, highlighting both opportunities and challenges. It was concluded that implementing a civic mission requires a gradual cultural and organizational shift, supported by motivation and shared purpose rather than rigid quantitative targets. Introducing KPIs progressively and aligning them with values such as community benefit, sustainability and professional development was recognized as the most effective approach.

To understand how FTTS aligns with the civic university concept, an overview of its current activities reveals strong educational, research and societal engagement components. In recent years, a major curriculum reform modernized programs that had not been updated for more than fifteen years. Between 2023 and 2024, three new undergraduate programs were accredited: Traffic and Transportation, Logistics and Aeronautics - with several specialized modules addressing road, air, rail, urban and intelligent transport systems. These programs were developed collaboratively with the Economic Council and industry partners following a learning-by-doing approach that integrates real-world challenges and public-sector cooperation. Parallel reforms of graduate programs aim to further strengthen this alignment with the labor market and sustainable mobility trends. The connection between education and practice is further demonstrated through the internship system, significantly improved by the PRISTUP project, which established cooperation with more than eighty companies. The project's digitization of internship processes and closer supervision enhanced satisfaction among both students and employers, while increasing the number of collaborative theses co-mentored by industry experts. Other initiatives such as TRANSPORTIKUM, a competition linking students and companies through real-world projects and Road Safety Summer School, organized jointly with the Centre of Excellence for Road Traffic Safety (CERTS), demonstrate FTTS's commitment to applied learning and social responsibility. The faculty also supports doctoral and postgraduate programs closely connected to industry, emphasizing research with economic applicability and maintaining a Science Foundation to fund doctoral work with practical outcomes. Lifelong learning programs offered by FTTS complement formal education by addressing industry needs through specialized training for companies and public institutions in logistics, road safety and transportation management. Scientific and commercial activities are integral to FTTS's civic role. The faculty actively participates in national and international projects, focusing on innovation, technology transfer and the "knowledge triangle" of education, research and industry collaboration. Examples of impactful research include the official national methodology for identifying hazardous

road locations, the establishment of the spin-out company SKAI LABS focused on AI-based air traffic optimization and award-winning innovations in road-risk detection, RFID-based traffic sign management and route optimization. FTTS also contributes to the global dissemination of knowledge through its internationally indexed journal *Promet – Traffic & Transportation* and the scientific conference *TRANSCODE* (formerly *ZIRP*), which connects academia, industry and policymakers from across Europe. Close cooperation with industry is institutionalized through the Economic Council, composed of representatives from twenty-one organizations, which advises on curriculum design, supports doctoral research and facilitates internships and scholarships.

To align with the Civic University concept, a comprehensive needs assessment was conducted to evaluate how FTTS can better integrate civic responsibility, sustainability and community engagement into its operations. The assessment identified several priority areas, including collaborative research with societal impact, community engagement and social responsibility, sustainability in education and research, inclusive education and lifelong learning and public–private partnerships that support social progress.

The SWOT analysis of FTTS's civic mission highlights both its strengths and the areas requiring development. Among its key strengths are recognized educational programs aligned with industry needs, strong collaboration with economic and community partners, international recognition through its scientific journal *Promet – Traffic & Transportation* and the *TRANSCODE* conference and active social initiatives such as the Road Safety Summer School and the Centre of Excellence for Road Traffic Safety. The Faculty also benefits from extensive national and international cooperation, which enhances its societal outreach and visibility. However, several weaknesses were identified, including the absence of a structured framework for measuring social impact, a lack of mapping and coordination between civic-related activities and an overemphasis on technical and industry-oriented initiatives. Cultural resistance to change and limited resources dedicated to civic engagement also present challenges. Opportunities include expanding existing community-focused programs, developing civic-oriented curricula, enhancing partnerships with civil society and strengthening staff competences in civic engagement. Additionally, leveraging international networks can support the creation of joint civic projects with regional partners. The main threats relate to potential resistance to institutional change, funding limitations for civic-oriented initiatives, competing academic priorities and possible policy constraints that may hinder the implementation of new civic practices.

Based on these findings, the development of a new mission and vision for FTTS aims to integrate the principles of civic engagement more explicitly into the Faculty's strategic framework. The proposed civic mission defines FTTS as an institution committed to providing high-quality, inclusive education and conducting scientific and professional research that meets societal needs. Through innovation and collaboration, the Faculty seeks to advance sustainable and equitable transport and logistics systems, working closely with communities and stakeholders to address real-world challenges through interdisciplinary research and lifelong learning.

In addition, the next step involved establishing Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to monitor progress in implementing the Civic Mission. As emphasized during collaboration with Hasselt University, implementing a civic mission represents a significant organizational change that must begin with mindset transformation rather than immediate numerical assessment. Traditional university KPIs—such as student enrollment, research income and publication numbers—capture only part of institutional performance. Civic universities must also measure partnership quality, community trust and social impact. Therefore, FTTS will adopt a balanced approach that combines quantitative indicators with qualitative ones reflecting engagement, inclusivity and collaboration. The initial phase should focus on building awareness and integrating civic values, with KPIs introduced gradually once a shared understanding of civic engagement is established among staff and students. A set of proposed qualitative and quantitative indicators has been identified to

support the long-term monitoring of FTTS's civic mission. Among the qualitative KPIs, key priorities include creating an inventory of civic-related activities to map existing strengths and gaps; promoting a "civic mindset" through education and cultural initiatives; expanding learning in partnership with local communities; developing lifelong learning programs aligned with social and labor market needs; strengthening the role of the Economic Council in identifying regional challenges; and embedding civic reflection and recognition, such as certificates or awards for civic engagement among students, staff and community partners.

These indicators emphasize participation, awareness and institutional learning as drivers of civic transformation. Complementing these are quantitative KPIs focused on measurable outcomes, including the number of courses and theses addressing civic themes; partnerships with domestic and international stakeholders; collaborations with government and public institutions; externally contracted projects; actions promoting equality and diversity; and training programs for FTTS staff on civic and societal topics. Other indicators include the number of accredited lifelong learning programs, science popularization activities, competitive project applications and peer-reviewed publications.

The implementation of the Civic Mission will follow a phased, multi-year plan inspired by HU's experience:

- *Year 1–2: Building foundations:* FTTS will formally define its Civic Mission and establish a task force including leadership, staff, students and external stakeholders. An inventory of civic activities will be compiled and initial training in community engagement methods will begin. Early initiatives-such as volunteering programs, community workshops, or public events-will pilot the concept. Qualitative KPIs related to awareness, reflection and participation will be introduced.
- *Years 3–4: Deepening Partnerships and Evaluation:* Partnerships with local and regional stakeholders will be formalized through agreements and teaching and research will be further aligned with societal and regional priorities such as sustainable transport or urban mobility. Both qualitative and quantitative KPIs will be expanded, staff competence in civic engagement strengthened and recognition mechanisms-awards and showcases-introduced to celebrate civic achievements.
- *Year 5 and Beyond: Embedding Civic Identity:* Civic engagement will become a permanent institutional feature through the creation of a dedicated Civic Office or equivalent coordinating body. Research and teaching will increasingly focus on policy-relevant, community-based topics, linking civic outcomes with FTTS's strategic and accreditation frameworks. Continuous dialogue with community stakeholders will ensure accountability and adaptability as needs evolve.