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XENIA: Higher Education Inclusiveness Index

Validation Report

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XENIA: HE Inclusiveness Index

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the field of education, training and youth

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Project Acronym	XENIA
Project Title	XENIA: HE Inclusiveness Index
Work Package	WP3
Deliverable Title	Validation report
Dissemination level	Public
Version	1.0
Delivery date	December 2022
Abstract	The D3.2 <i>XENIA Validation</i> report has been drawn up to capture the findings of feedbacks collected by partners during the tests of the XENIA Index at its pilot Deployment and Validation phase. These findings will be the basis for the fine-tuning of the major results to produce the Fine-tuned and Validated versions of the XENIA HEIs Inclusiveness Index. The validation report will be disseminated to complement the results of WP1 and WP2 even though the report is purely of technical nature and will outline the results of the procedures, steps and methodologies used by partners in the validation phase. As such its value is recognized more for those stakeholders interested in the research and academic underpinnings of the XENIA Index rather than the general public. Nonetheless, partners will disseminate the report to the specific target audience of practitioners, community of scientists and researchers, etc.
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Table of Contents

Summary.....	4
Introduction	5
I. The XENIA project	5
II. The XENIA Inclusiveness Index.....	5
III. Validation Report	6
The XENIA Validation report	7
I. Methodology.....	7
II. Results.....	9
1. Overall points	9
2. Evaluation Questionnaire for the Matrix (Specialised Personnel)	
11	
3. Evaluation Questionnaire for the Survey (Students and Staff)..	13
Finetuning actions suggested.....	15
Final remarks & Conclusion	16
Annexes	17
Annex I. Evaluation Questionnaire for the Matrix (Specialised Personnel of the Institution)	17
Annex II. Evaluation Questionnaire for the Survey (Students and Staff)	21
Annex III. Partners' Validation Report Guidelines & Template	25
References	26

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Summary

The *XENIA: HE Inclusiveness Index* is a three-year, Erasmus+ co-funded, European project, whose main aim has been to develop a tool, namely the **XENIA Index**, in order to assist European Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in evaluating the equality and inclusiveness strategies that they adopt to address diversity on the grounds of sex, gender and sexual orientation within their contexts.

The *XENIA Inclusiveness Index* consists of three key elements, specifically:

a Matrix with a series of objective indicators;

a Survey for Students and Staff of HEIs to gauge their subjective perceptions, and the XENIA Index, that is a vector Index that allows to summarise the information collected, and has been developed and tested from the project partners concluding to various results and accumulated relevant knowledge, resulting to the production of a number of corresponding Deliverables.

This Deliverable, the *XENIA Validation report*, was based on the data gathered through evaluation questionnaires for the Matrix and the Student and Staff survey and an expert evaluation report. The first one was applied to Specialized Personnel while the second to the survey's target group, and the expert has been assigned from the Coordinator in common agreement of the consortium.

The Matrix validation looked into several parameters including indicators, accessibility, effectiveness, scoring and rating system, platform design and overall satisfaction. The student and staff survey was validated on the basis of its structure, accessibility, relevance, adequate or not coverage of the topic of inclusivity by HEIs, reliability, platform structure and easiness to navigate, and overall satisfaction as well. The accumulated data will be applied to produce the final and validated XENIA deliverables.

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Introduction

I. The XENIA project

The “XENIA: HE Inclusiveness Index” is a three-year, Erasmus+ co-funded, European project, whose main aim has been to develop a tool, namely the **XENIA Index**, in order to assist European Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in evaluating the equality and inclusiveness strategies that they adopt to address diversity on the grounds of sex, gender and sexual orientation within their contexts.

II. The XENIA Inclusiveness Index

The *XENIA Inclusiveness Index* has been defined based on the results that emerged from a preliminary research phase, conducted by the partners during the project’s Work Package 1 (WP1) activities, that led to the identification of the specific **Thematic Areas** and **Indicators** to effectively measure the inclusiveness of Higher Education (HE) settings.

The *XENIA Index* consists of **three key elements**:

- 1. Matrix**, consisting of a **series of objective indicators** that assess the inclusiveness of a HEI;
- 2. Survey for Students and Staff of HEIs** to gauge the **subjective perceptions** of inclusiveness in the HEI, and
- 3. XENIA Index**, that is a **vector index** that allows to: summarise the information collected, record and note changes in specific values of the assessment process.

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III. Validation Report

This Deliverable, the *XENIA Validation report* has been mostly based on the data gathered through evaluation questionnaires for the Matrix and the Student and Staff survey. The first one was applied to Specialized Personnel while the second to the survey's target group.

In more detail, the Matrix validation looked into several parameters including indicators, accessibility, effectiveness, scoring and rating system, Platform design and overall satisfaction. The student and staff survey was validated on the basis of its structure, accessibility, relevance, adequate or not coverage of the topic of inclusivity by HEIs, reliability, platform structure and easiness to navigate and overall satisfaction as well. The accumulated data from all partners will be applied to the XENIA tools in order to produce the final, fine tuned and validated versions, as well as a number of further Deliverables.





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The XENIA Validation report

I. Methodology

The Methodology, processes and steps followed by the partners for the XENIA Test Deployment and Validation (T&V) activities have been described in detail in the *XENIA Validation Plan*, a document produced by the Hellenic Open University with cooperation and the agreement of all partners before the Deployment phase. This document has been set on the Technical Annex (TA) as “Confidential, addressed only to members of the consortium (including EACEA and Commission services and project reviewers)”.

In the *XENIA Validation plan* it has been defined the specific schedule, activities, tools (e.g. templates of forms to collect feedback from users) for the test and validation activities for the pilot roll-out of the XENIA Inclusiveness Index in all its components. The plan provided guidelines to partners on how to implement the Matrix and the Surveys and their parallel validation activities. Its main objective has been to ensure that the pilot and validation activities would be carried out by the partners in a standardized and comparable fashion: that would allow coherence in the activities, i.e. all partners to follow standardized procedures, timeline, tools, etc, and reliability of inputs and feedback for the finalization of the content and material, i.e. accuracy of results for forming the final XENIA Index.

Timeline of Deployment & Validation

The partnership was planned to test the XENIA in the HEIs partners of the project, for a period of six (6) months starting from January to June 2022. Validation activities would run for the same period of time.

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Indicators for the XENIA Deployment

As it has been set in the TA, for the full Index pilot the following indicators needed to be met:

- At least 5 HEIs
- 2,500 students; 200 administrative staff; 200 teaching staff members

In parallel, the collection of feedback, inputs, and comments to test/ assure the reliability of the Index and its underlying components (Objective Matrix, Thematic Areas, Indicators; Subjective Surveys to gauge students' and staff's perception; Aggregation and consolidation mechanisms and tools; Scoring and ranking mechanisms) were planned to be collected via a two-phase Validation procedure: a smaller pilot to get initial feedback and the full pilot deployment, also enhanced by the evaluation of the XENIA Index mechanism by an expert, that thus have all been followed.

End results of the Validation

Finally, the end results of the Deployment and Validation procedures and activities, as set in the TA, are:

1. The tested and validated *XENIA Inclusiveness Index* in its final version after the fine-tuning benefiting from inputs/feedback/comments of users in the pilot deployment phase.
2. *Mainstreaming Guidelines and Operational Manual* that the partners will develop to promote the mainstreaming and uptake of the XENIA Inclusiveness Index from other HEIs across the Erasmus+ area.
3. A set of *Policy Recommendations* that will stem from the results of implementation and will provide valuable evidence, insight, and data for policymakers to inform and influence formulation, design, and implementation of more effective policies, programmes, and initiatives to promote inclusion in HE.

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II. Results

1. Overall points

The Deployment and Validation procedure has been a much more difficult process than what was anticipated at the Technical Annex and by the partners. Specifically, GDPR, an issue not calculated appropriately at the TA, has taken a great amount of effort and work from the consortium in order to be addressed and solved. These, internal, in each Institution, applied procedures, that took a far larger amount of time to be solved in some, such as the Hellenic Open University, than others, as well as the parallel possibility to not meet the indicators in the timespan of 6 months, had affected the Deployment and Validation Timeline.

Thus, partners in a risk management logic, commonly decided to extend the period from 6 months in order to achieve a total close to the originally planned, and thus, run the pilot until December 2022. Furthermore, instead of the planned 5, finally a total of: 15 HEIs have participated in the Deployment, These were:

Italy: Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II; Università della Campania ""Luigi Vanvitelli"; Università degli Studi Niccolo Cusano.

Spain: Universitat de Barcelona; Universidad de Málaga.

Greece: Hellenic Open University involved 6 more HEIs in order to increase its low participation. These were: ALBA Graduate Business School, Agricultural University of Athens, Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences, University of Patras, University of Ioannina and University of Western Macedonia.

Ireland: University College Dublin

Slovenia: Univerza v Ljubljani; Univerza na Primorskem.

Lastly, there have been 6 Anonymous (without an indication of the HEI) replies.

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Regarding the Deployment participants', a total number of 1.757 responses: 1.548 students; 8 Specialised Personnel; 94 Faculty members; and 107 Staff have been collected. Most of them from the University of Naples, followed in number by the University of Barcelona.

Finally, regarding the overall satisfaction rate, as this has been measured by a dedicated question at the end of the use of each tool, the results have been very positive, fact confirming that the overall XENIA Index has been accepted well and seems to be achieving its goals.



Figure 1: Overall assessment of the Index

Lastly, based on the results of national reports that have been compiled by the partners, as it has been originally set in the Validation Plan, the following specific feedback has been provided and summed up for the needs of this report:

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2. Evaluation Questionnaire for the Matrix (Specialised Personnel)

Matrix and Indicators

Overall the specialized personnel answered that they were somewhat satisfied with the structure of the questionnaire. The same degree of satisfaction was evident in the replies concerning the instructions for completing the survey.

Accessibility

Specialized personnel indicated very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with the usability of the survey as well as with the fact that the questions were clear and sufficiently understandable.

Effectiveness

Specialized personnel were quite satisfied with the relevancy, i.e., the extent to which the required information is applicable and helpful, while their satisfaction with coverage seemed somewhat lower, to the extent to which the required information covers the range of topics related to HEIs' inclusiveness of differences based on sex, gender, and sexual orientation.

Scoring, rating and ranking system

Regarding the scoring, rating and ranking system the respondents expressed neither satisfaction nor dissatisfaction with the hierarchical structure of indicators and sub-indicators, while expressing the same with the impact of the score for each thematic area on the global score.





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Platform

As far as the use of the platform is concerned, there seemed to be a wide degree of satisfaction relating to the quality of navigation, structure, design, declaring that there were no specific technical problems faced.

Overall satisfaction

By far the largest percentage of respondents is neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the technical relevance of the platform, while most of them were somewhat satisfied with the statement that the platform is user-friendly.

General Questions

Finally, these experts did not perceive any items as offensive and did not feel excluded from the instrument. Privacy management was also rated highly.





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3. Evaluation Questionnaire for the Survey (Students and Staff)

The survey structure

Overall the respondents seemed to find the guidelines and the overall survey structure satisfactory and easy to use.

Accessibility

In the area of accessibility, two parameters were required to be assessed, the first related to Comprehension, that is, the extent to which the questions are clear (without ambiguity) and easy to understand. The second to Usability, that is, the extent to which it is easy for respondents to make their choices. Most responses were on the positive side for both items.

Effectiveness

For the area investigating Instrument Effectiveness, three aspects were assessed. Regarding Relevance, i.e., the extent to which the information requested is applicable and useful, most respondents agreed or strongly agreed. With respect to Coverage, i.e., the extent to which the information requested covers the range of topics related to the inclusiveness of HEIs with respect to differences based on sex, gender, and sexual orientation (in terms of subject areas and indicators), again most replies were confined between satisfied and extremely satisfied. In addition, on Reliability, which is the extent to which the survey is able to capture the dynamics of inclusiveness at the HEI level, a high level of satisfaction was expressed.

Platform

Next, a series of information was asked with respect to the use of the platform, relating to the quality of navigation, structure, design, and possible presence of technical issues.

Regarding this area, subjects were asked to express their degree of agreement or

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disagreement with respect to four statements. On this the replies were somewhat divided showing a strong biased hypothetically related to the degree of digital literacy. However it is quite important to note that the overwhelming majority did not face any technical problems during the use of the platform.

Overall Satisfaction

Concerning overall satisfaction from the survey was based on different parameters, such as ease of use and technical relevance. On the first aspect most respondents showed high degree of satisfaction. On the second, an average degree of satisfaction surfaced.





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Finetuning actions suggested

First of all, it is worth mentioning that no major comments on basic XENIA Index elements such as the five Thematic areas and/ or the indicators has been given. The feedback provided mostly included:

- Improved layout user friendliness for better mobile and laptop usability based on the “matrix values and display options”;
- The final Thank you sentence at the end of the survey to be added in the results page;
- To add a “Blank space” in the drop down menu in the student/staff survey;
- Some Indicator values and queries to be fine-tuned;
- The number of questions to be removed cause it has been mentioned as possibly misleading.

These finetuned suggestions have already been shared with Internet Web Solutions (IWS), the partner responsible for building the algorithm and the XENIA Index, and will be the basis for all relevant finetuned actions in order to produce the *Final Xenia Index* and tools.





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Final remarks & Conclusion

Although a series of important issues regarding participation has raised, especially identified in the GDPR process that the piloting partners had to complete before the Deployment and Validation phase, the consortium has managed through various internal risk management means to acquire an important number of responses for the XENIA Deployment.

Overall, both phases of validation, i.e. the feedback questionnaires received and the expert's evaluation of the Consolidation mechanism that was completed before the pilot end, in the expert's word "(...) have highlighted the full applicability and strength of an innovative tool – the XENIA Inclusiveness Index – that can guide HEIs to assess thoroughly the level of inclusiveness of their policies and practice, and, at the same time, gauge the actual perception that students and staff have about it."

Finally, merging from the results that have been presented in this Validation report and the Deployment results, the final XENIA project Deliverables to be produced as set in the TA, are:

1. The tested and validated *XENIA Inclusiveness Index* in its final version after the fine-tuning benefiting from inputs/feedback/comments of users in the pilot deployment phase.
2. *Mainstreaming Guidelines and Operational Manual* that the partners will develop to promote the mainstreaming and uptake of the XENIA Inclusiveness Index from other HEIs across the Erasmus+ area.
3. A set of *Policy Recommendations* that will stem from the results of implementation and will provide valuable evidence, insight, and data for policymakers to inform and influence formulation, design, and implementation of more effective policies, programmes, and initiatives to promote inclusion in HE.

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Annexes

Annex I. Evaluation Questionnaire for the Matrix (Specialised Personnel of the Institution)

I. Matrix and indicators

1. On a 5-point scale (1-not satisfied, 5-very satisfied) how would you rate the following areas of the Matrix:

- a. Guidelines on how to fill in/ use the Matrix
- b. The structure of the Matrix (e.g., presence of indicators and sub-indicators, thematic distribution of the indicators, etc.)

Accessibility

2. On a 5-point scale (1-not satisfied, 5-very satisfied) how would you rate the following areas of the Matrix:

- a. Understanding, i.e., the extent to which statements are clear (without ambiguity) and easy to understand
- b. Usability, i.e., the extent to which it is easy for respondents to make their choices

Effectiveness

3. On a 5-point scale (1-not satisfied, 5-very satisfied) how would you rate the following areas of the XENIA Matrix:

- a. Relevancy, i.e., the extent to which the required information is applicable and helpful





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- b. Coverage, i.e., the extent to which the required information covers the range of topics related to HEIs' inclusiveness of differences based on sex, gender, and sexual orientation (in terms of thematic areas and indicators).
- c. Reliability, i.e., the extent to which the Index can capture the dynamics of inclusiveness at the HEI level

Scoring, rating, and ranking system

4. On a 5-point scale (1-not satisfied, 5-very satisfied) how would you rate the following areas of scoring, rating, and ranking system:

- a. The hierarchy between the indicators and sub-indicators
- b. The impact of the score for each thematic area on the global score
- c. Kindly comment your opinion: _____

Platform

5. On a 5-point scale (1-strongly disagree, 5-strongly agree) how would you rate the following areas of the platform supporting the XENIA Index tool you used:

- a. The navigation is easy
- b. The platform is well structured
- c. The platform's design is enjoyable
- d. I didn't face any technical issues

II. Overall Satisfaction

6. Overall, on a 5-point scale (1-not satisfied, 5-very satisfied) how would you rate the following areas of the XENIA Index tool you used:

- a. User-friendliness
- b. Technical relevance

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- c. Thematic areas coverage:
 - Institution
 - Policy & Programmes
 - Pedagogy & Academic Programming
 - Support Services
 - Academic Life
- d. Indicators used
- e. Design of the Matrix
- f. Statements familiarity
- g. The structure of the XENIA platform and its components

III. General Questions

- 7. Did you find any of the statements offensive or degrading? (yes/no)
- 8. Did you feel excluded from the MATRIX at any point? (yes/no)

Please briefly explain/ describe

- 9. Please help us to improve the XENIA Indicators by providing additional comments
(Open questions)

Please indicate areas and suggestions for Improvement regarding the XENIA Indicators

Please indicate any areas for improvement for the platform





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10. Help us to improve the XENIA Platform by providing additional comments (Open questions)
11. Is your privacy respected and protected? (yes/no)
12. The questionnaire can be accessed via link at the end of the Test.





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Annex II. Evaluation Questionnaire for the Survey (Students and Staff)

I. Survey and questions

1. On a 5-point scale (1-not satisfied, 5-very satisfied) how would you rate the following areas of the survey:

- a. Guidelines on how to fill in the survey
- b. The survey structure

Accessibility

2. On a 5-point scale (1-not satisfied, 5-very satisfied) how would you rate the following areas of the survey:

- a. Understanding, i.e., the extent to which questions are clear (without ambiguity) and easy to understand
- b. Usability, i.e., the extent to which it is easy for respondents to make their choices

Effectiveness

3. On a 5-point scale (1-not satisfied, 5-very satisfied) how would you rate the following areas of the survey:

- a. Relevancy, i.e., the extent to which the required information is applicable and helpful
- b. Coverage, i.e., the extent to which the required information covers the range of topics related to HEIs' inclusiveness of differences based on sex, gender, and sexual orientation (in terms of thematic areas and indicators).
- c. Reliability, i.e., the extent to which the survey can capture the dynamics of inclusiveness at the HEI level

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Platform

4. From a scale 1-5 (1-strongly disagree, 5-strongly agree) how would you rate the following areas of the platform supporting the XENIA Index tool you used:
- The navigation is easy
 - The platform is well structured
 - The platform's design is enjoyable
 - I didn't face any technical issues

II. Overall Satisfaction

5. Overall, on a 5-point scale (1-not satisfied, 5-very satisfied) how would you rate the following areas of the XENIA Index tool you used:
- User-friendliness
 - Technical relevance
 - Thematic areas coverage:
 - Institution
 - Policy & Programmes
 - Pedagogy & Academic Programming
 - Support Services
 - Academic Life
 - Questions included in the Survey
 - The survey design
 - Questions familiarity
 - The structure of the XENIA platform and its components

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III. General Questions

6. Did you find any of the questions offensive or degrading? (yes/no)

Please briefly explain/ describe

7. Did you feel excluded from the survey at any point? (yes/no)

8. How did you find out about the XENIA Index?

- Via Email
- Personal contact
- On social media
- On the University website
- Other. Please specify

9. Please help us to improve the XENIA Indicators by providing additional comments (Open questions)

indicate areas and suggestions for improving the XENIA Survey

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10. Help us to improve the XENIA Platform by providing additional comments (Open questions)

Please indicate any areas for improvement of the platform

11. Is your privacy respected and protected? (yes/no)

The questionnaire can be accessed via link at the end of the Test.





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Annex III. Partners' Validation Report Guidelines & Template

Please follow the instructions below:

1. Translate the replies in open questions of the spreadsheet into English and form a new spreadsheet. Using the translated spreadsheet, indicate the replies' results per topic and include a description of their answers to all relevant statements.
2. Please complete the following report template:

Summary

Participants' profiles

Please describe the profiles of the survey participants' including all relevant information, such as gender, academic profile, country of residence (questions 1-5 of the questionnaire).

Percentages and charts

Please conduct a statistical analysis that includes percentages and charts

- Regarding yes / no questions, please use percentages and pie charts;
- Regarding Likert-questions, please use percentages and bar charts;
- In open questions please write the responses in English (ANNEXES I, II, III).

Conclusions

Please make conclusions regarding the results of your HEI.





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References

<https://www.xeniaindex.eu/>.

XENIA Validation findings.

XENIA project approved proposal (internal document).

