

NEWSLETTER #1

01 | ABOUT PROJECT

Project Creating Social Impact

The European Commission's latest Higher Education Modernisation Agenda highlights the transformative role of universities in the society. Precisely, rather than being actors of only economic impact, HEIs need to strengthen their 'civic' responsibilities. Despite the argued relevance for more social engagement, respective societal engagement mechanisms have not been well developed in the HEIs. Indeed, latest numbers show that universities still have relatively more technology transfer offices than civic engagement offices. Consequently, we still witness a focus on universities' business engagement compared to e.g., community building or collaborations with NGOs, ultimately hampering the social impact of HEIs' activities. Simultaneously, the ongoing pandemic of Covid-19 amplifies the need for HEI's societal engagement. The current times of uncertainty and destabilisation form the background against which societal engagement is most needed. Indeed, HEIs can be a fruitful source for supporting societal recovery by transferring leading edge insights to the society. This science-to-society transfer is of severe importance, given the fact that Covid-19 has brought about societal challenges (e.g., how to let elderly citizens participate in a socially distant society) that we need to solve to ensure prosperity of our economies and societies.

The unpredictable context of Covid-19 creates new opportunities of digital community engagement, which can be embedded in HEI's teaching and learning activities. However, these opportunities are not straightforward to implement and thus present substantial challenges for HEIs, ultimately limiting the likelihood of implementation. Creating societal impact through digital teaching formats comes with the following core challenges:

- **LACK OF 'EASY TO IMPLEMENT' DIGITAL TEACHING FORMATS.** In the early phase of the Covid-19 pandemic, activities of HE lecturers had to quickly shift towards 'mainly digital' to comply with the emerging social distancing paradigm. While most of the HE lecturers succeeded in quickly (sometimes even rough-and-ready) transforming into digital teaching, the focus was predominately on the 'core' content. In other words, pursuing the 'third mission' of the HEI (i.e., creating societal impact) is currently lagging due to the absence of digital formats, which can be easily implemented by HE lecturers.
- **ABSENCE OF HE LECTURERS' SKILLS TO CREATE SOCIETAL IMPACT VIA DIGITAL TEACHING FORMATS.** HE lecturers engaged in teaching currently lack an adequate skill set to design and conduct teaching formats, which go beyond the 'core' content of the curriculum. Whereas technological tools have grown in numbers, HE lecturers frequently rely on mainstream tools and methods, thereby neglecting hitherto niche (frugal) solutions. This focus on a few mainstream solutions ultimately hampers the social impact of digital teaching formats.
- **NO 'ONE SIZE FITS ALL'-TEACHING FORMAT FOR GENERATING SOCIAL IMPACT.** Previous research has emphasized the complexity of social challenges. Subsequently, to tackle these challenges, HE lecturers are confronted with the need to design teaching formats, which can be adapted to the specific challenge, ultimately overcoming the "one size fits all"-paradox.

The focal project tackles these challenges by integrating (a.) expertise of science-to-society transfer tools (i.e., tools and instruments to overcome transfer barriers in science/society projects and thus to successfully connect science and society) for tailor-fit approaches to create societal impact, and (b.) expertise of how to enable HE lecturers in digital teaching formats. Consequently, this project will develop a Digital Configurator, which allows creating social impact through customized digital teaching formats. In fact, the digital configurator will give birth to customized digital social impact generation (DSIG) courses. Through considering the particularities of the social challenges as well as the current digital skill set of the HE lecturer, the Digital configurator suggests custom-fit digital teaching formats, ultimately equipping HE lecturers to foster their role as being socially engaged. Beyond this, the configured DSIG courses enable students to get involved in an actual societal challenge, which is beyond online lectures, thereby fostering students' entrepreneurial and social thinking and acting.

Moreover, the project applies an iterative development process, thereby continuously incorporating feedback from all target groups to ensure high relevance of the Digital Configurator. Lastly, a 'training for scaling workshop concept' will ensure capacity building for HE lecturers from beyond the project partner consortium. Thereby, continuation and application of the developed project resources is ensured – beyond the end of the project and across European HEIs.

02 | PROJECT TEAM



FH MÜNSTER
University of Applied Sciences



University of Ljubljana



03 | PROJECT NEWS

Kick-off meeting

Our Kick-off meeting took place on June 29-30, 2021. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, the meeting was held online. For two days, project partners got to know each other and agreed upon the project timetable and further activities. The project leader MUAS presented the project objectives, timelines, work packages and intellectual outputs, collaboration arrangements & communication. Other project partners presented their intellectual outputs and the timetable regarding the outputs. All project partners agreed on the project activities and further steps.



O1 – Best practice audit

The 'Best Practice Audit' of digital teaching formats currently offered by European HE lecturers will map the available digital teaching formats. The audit will focus on teaching formats that aim to have a social impact. The report will be based on in-depth interviews with HE lecturers and a systematic search for secondary material (e.g., practitioner reports, newspaper articles). The audit will provide HE and lecturers with a solid basis for designing digital teaching



formats to achieve social impact. The presentation of 20 best practices and a comprehensive list of success factors, combined with local, national, and European mapping, will reflect the knowledge presented and facilitate adoption by HE lecturers across Europe. The audit will be produced (among other things) by analyzing data from in-depth interviews with HE lecturers.

Intellectual Output 1 phase started in July 2021, and project partners started collecting best practices from their partners. Project partners agreed to

conduct an online survey and in-person depth interviews with selected online survey participants.

After several months, 54 clean survey responses are available and descriptive quantitative analysis has been completed. The respondents are from Europe from 11 different countries. The project partners have conducted more than 40 interviews with the identified online survey respondents. The project team is currently coding the responses and preparing the qualitative analysis. The first version of the audit will be presented to the partners at the next project team meeting in early February.

Virtual Team Project Meeting

On February 1 and 2, 2022 a virtual Team project meeting was held. Due to the current COVID situation the meeting was held via MS Teams platform.



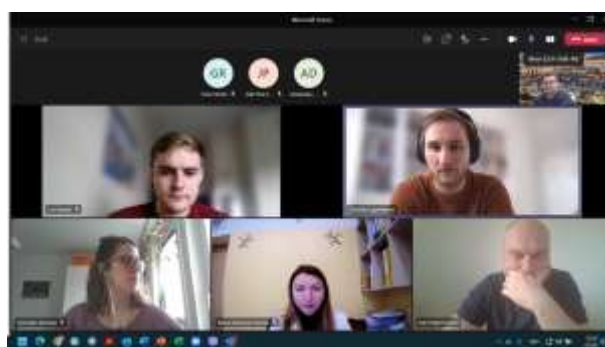
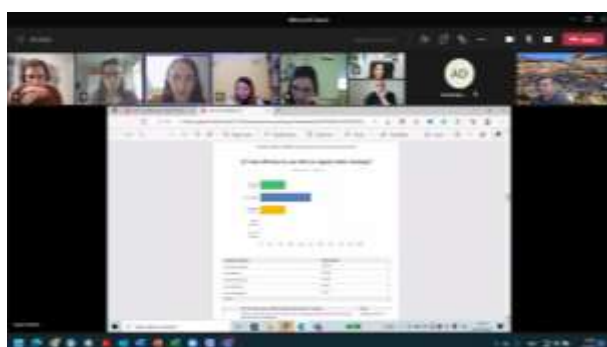
During two days of team meeting, MUAS, as leader for IO1 presented status of research on Best Practice Audit of digital teaching formats.

The research results will be presented in a report which will be published on project web page and will be distributed to the project stakeholders.

After discussion on IO1 project team members discussed how the results of IO1 will influence the IO2 and work in the second phase of the project.

Project team members also discussed about the dissemination activities for the next phase of the project.

dissemination activities for the next phase of the project.



04 | PROJECT DISSEMINATION

During the first six months of the project duration, the project team organized and implemented several dissemination activities.

Pforzheim, Germany October 21, 2021

During the 42nd meeting between J. J. Strossmayer University of Osijek and Pforzheim University of Applied Sciences, the team from the Faculty of Economics in Osijek, presented the project *Creating social impact through customized digital teaching formats*.

They invited colleagues from Pforzheim University of Applied Sciences to fill in the survey during the presentation. During the discussion, how we can create social impact was raised. The colleagues from Pforzheim University of Applied Sciences showed interest in the Audit report, which will result from Phase 1 of the project.





Yerevan, Armenia – November 10, 2021

During the Erasmus+ mobility project, KA107 with the Armenian State University of Economics in Yerevan (ASUE), a member of the EFOS team presented the project *Creating social impact through customized digital teaching formats* to the students and professors of ASUE. After the presentation, the participants were invited to participate in the research phase by answering the questions in the online survey.

Ljubljana, Slovenia – November 8-9, 2021



Creating social impact through customized digital teaching formats project has been presented during the international conference Resetting Education for the Digital Age, which took place in Ljubljana, Slovenia, on November 8th and 9th, 2021.

Our project team member Dan Podjed was part of the ResetEDU's panel discussion, titled The New Role(s) of School in the Digital Era. During the discussion, he tried to highlight the dilemmas connected to digital and remote teaching and reflect on our teaching and learning experiences from 2020 and 2021.

Osijek, Croatia – November 23, 2021

EFOS team members presented the project *Creating social impact through customized digital teaching formats* at the EU Projects Open Day at the Faculty of Economics in Osijek. During this event, EFOS team members talked about the project's goals and its phases. They presented the current research phase and invited all participants to participate in an online survey. They also announced the research report, which will be available in January 2022.



Osijek, Croatia – December 2021



The project *Creating social impact through customized digital teaching formats* was presented in the Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek newspaper. In the short article, the Faculty of Economics team members in Osijek presented the main goals of the project and the project phases. The article is available [here](#) (page 4 - unfortunately only in Croatian).

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