

# NEWSLETTER #2

## 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

### 01 – Best practice audit



The 'Best Practice Audit' of digital teaching formats currently offered by European HE lecturers is published and is available at the project website - <https://digitalsocialimpact.eu/> and on our social networks (Twitter and LinkedIn) so everyone can take a look at report and find the result of in-depth interviews with HE lecturers and a systematic search for secondary material (e.g., practitioner reports, newspaper articles).

Report provides 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, reflect the knowledge presented and facilitate adoption by HE lecturers across Europe.

Report was able to show that there are clear vital barriers and drivers in the creation and implementation of courses that aim to convey content and create social impact.

Our report has organized these findings and three phases: Conceptualization, Delivery,

and Reflection. In each of these phases, different elements come into play that should be recognized and kept in mind by those organizing such courses, mainly the lecturers. When dealing with external partners, communication is critical and must be actively shaped. As one conclusion from the combination of our desk research, survey, and interviews, we can say that social impact can be part of many different curricula. Second, many of these key drivers and barriers are universal for the different fields and backgrounds. With the challenges we face, getting HEIs more involved and students more engaged is crucial to address them and find solutions. We hope that our findings help more lecturers to pursue this actively.

### IO2 - Development of 'Digital Societal Impact Generation' course toolkit



Building on the “Best practice audit” and the distilled success factors from IO1, IO2 creates a digital configurator which enables HEI educators to create a customizable societal impact course by choosing their preferred best practices in HEI led approaches, activities and topics to achieve societal impact.

We want to develop an online tool that supports (primarily HE) lecturers in developing and implementing service-learning teaching formats in their HEIs. Our approach here will be to bring our learnings from research into an easily comprehensible guiding tool that offers help throughout the identified stages of the process by highlighting

the different barriers and drivers, giving suggestions for digital tools, course structures, and further information points.

### IO3 - Development of configurator for ‘Digital Societal Impact Generation’ course”

After the finish of IO2, project team members entered the phase 3 of the project during the project team meeting in Ljubljana. Phase 3 encompasses Pilot testing the configurator in two simultaneous application scenarios. The pilot tests are used to iteratively improve the configurator based on the HE lecturers’ user experiences. Pilot testing the developed configurator for designing a course on ‘Digital societal impact generation’ in simultaneous application scenarios, collaborating with real-world social organizations. Based on continuously feedback collection from the pilot test, the agile development process allows an iterative improvement of the digital configurator. UL and IRL will work with their partner Institute 404 on testing the configurator



### Team Project meetings

In early June, the Digital Social Impact (DSI) project team held a third project meeting. This time we finally met in person, in Ljubljana.

During the project meeting project members finally saw each other face to face. The topics included information on previous two phases – IO1 and IO2 and introduction to the phase 3 – IO3.

Team members agreed that the next project meeting will be in Osijek on October 23 and 24, 2022 and agreed on another project team meeting in Munster in spring 2023.



During the project meeting, a short visit to the Institute 404 was organised to familiarise ourselves with their pedagogical activities and innovation and development projects. Iza Burnik, a mentor from 404, introduced us to their activities and workspaces and shared with us some very insightful experiences about working with different age groups and transgenerational experiences.



Over the next six months, two project partners, University of Ljubljana (UL) and Institute for Innovation and Development (IRI UL), will work with the Institute 404 to test the digital configurator developed in a DSI project on a real-life challenge. Stay tuned to learn more about what will happen as part of this collaboration.



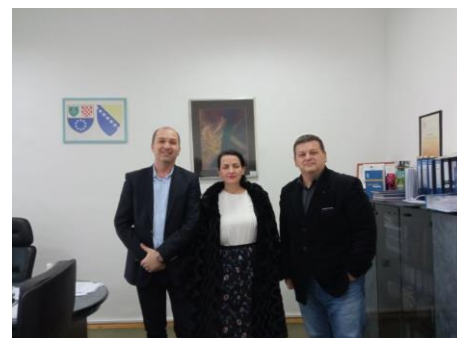
If you are interested in the work of Institute 404, check out their website for information on youth programmes, educational activities for children or research and development activities.

## 04 | PROJECT DISSEMINATION

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

### Meeting at University Bihać Faculty of Economics, Bihać, 11.2.2022.

EFOS team members presented the Creating social impact through customized digital teaching formats project at the University Bihać Faculty of Economics in Bihać. EFOS team members presented current project activities and preliminary project phase 1 research results during the meeting. Representatives of the Faculty of Economics in Bihać showed their interest in the project as they see the potential implementation of final project results due to the current situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina.



### University of Priština, temporarily in Kosovska Mitrovica



During the visit to Kosovska Mitrovica, project member Aleksandar Erceg presented the Digital Social Impact project to students and professors of the Faculty of Economics. Attendees have shown interest in project results and the potential use of the configurator (the result of the IO2 part of the project) for their future work in creating social impact through digital tools.

### Momentum blog – June 6, 2022

Our project was part of the blog published on Momentum website. Story written by Val Robus presented the whole project, gave information where are we at the moment and what is coming in the future months. You can find story at: <https://momentumconsulting.ie/european-projects/the-digital-social-impact-hybrid-meeting/>.

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