



NEWSLETTER #3

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 NEWS

IO1 – 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)! Feel free to take a look and find the result of in-depth interviews with HE lecturers and a systematic search for secondary material (e.g., practitioner reports, newspaper articles). The report provides the 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. We also show that there are clear barriers and drivers in the creation and implementation of courses that aim to convey content and create social impact.

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



Building on the “Best practice audit” and the distilled success factors from IO1, in IO2 we created 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 started developing an online tool that supports (primarily HE) lecturers in designing and delivering service-learning teaching formats in their HEIs. Our approach here is 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. Check out the current version which is continuously being worked on: <https://digitalsocialimpact.eu/course-configurator/>

IO3 – Piloting the 'Digital Societal Impact Generation' course configurator

The third phase of the project, the piloting of the developed configurator for creating digital courses for social impact, started at the project team meeting in June 2022 in Ljubljana. This phase consists of 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. We collaborated with real-world social organisations and collected feedback which is currently being used to refine the configurator. The leaders of this phase of the project are the University of Ljubljana (UL) and the Institute for Innovation and Development (IRI UL). During the past 6 months, members of the project team worked on improving the configurator - activities and tools. Examples of activities and tools were obtained through cases of good practice and conducted interviews that are part of the Best Practice Audit.

IO4 – Continuation phase

IO4 will be led by the University of Josip Juraj Strossmayer in Osijek and will consist of creating a workshop concept and application guidelines for European academics in HEIs. This will allow attracting more academics, enabling them to use the configurator and scale the project on the European level. The final phase will include course templates, the creation of workshops and dissemination of the previous two items.

Team Project meetings

In late October, the Digital Social Impact (DSI) project team held a fourth project meeting, for the second time in person, in Osijek, Croatia. During the project meeting project members met new team members from Leitrim and Ljubljana. The topics included information on IO2 phase, current IO3 phase and what can be expected from the IO4 phase of the project. Team members agreed that the next project meeting will take place in Münster, Germany March 2023.



During the project meeting, a short visit to the Children’s creative center Dokkica was organised to familiarise ourselves with their pedagogical activities, innovative approach to work with children and different projects. Ines Novak, Dokkica center president, introduced us to their activities and workspaces and shared with us some very insightful experiences about working with different age groups and transgenerational experiences.



Dokkica is University of Josip Juraj Strossmayer’s social partner in this project and during the next few months will work with project team members to test the digital configurator on a real-life challenge. Children’s Creative Centre DOKKICA is a non-governmental, non-profit



association, established in 2011 whose mission is to support children in growing up and developing their potential through various programs and activities. Find out more about their various activities here: <https://dokkica.hr/>

03 | PROJECT DISSEMINATION

During the third six months of the project duration, the project team organized and implemented several dissemination activities. All activities were presented at our social networks.

Project presentation at innovation exhibition in Osijek, 12-14.10

On the 18th innovation exhibition and competition for the best student business plan #BUDIUZOR, in Osijek on October 12 to October 14, 2022, team members from Faculty of Economics in Osijek presented activities and results of the DSI project.

04 | PROJECT TEAM



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