digital
social
impact
education for the future

NEWSLETTER
#4

Newsletter #4
May 31, 2023

By
EFOS

01 | ABOUT THE PROJECT

Project Creating Social Impact

The European Commission's latest Higher Education Modernisation Agenda highlights the transformative role of universities in society. 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, the latest numbers show universities still have relatively more technology transfer offices than civic engagement ones. 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 destabilization 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. This science-to-society transfer is of extreme importance, given 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 the prosperity of our economies and societies.

The unpredictable context of Covid-19 creates new opportunities for 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, the activities of HE lecturers had to quickly shift towards 'mainly digital' to comply with the emerging social distancing paradigm. While most HE lecturers succeeded quickly (sometimes even rough-and-ready) in 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 lagging due to the absence of digital formats, which HE lecturers can quickly implement.
- **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 that 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, HE lecturers are confronted with the need to design teaching formats adapted to the specific challenge to tackle these challenges, 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 connect science and society successfully) 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 to create social impact through customized digital teaching formats. The digital configurator will give birth to customized digital social impact generation (DSIG) courses. By considering the particularities of the social challenges and the HE lecturer's current digital skill set, 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 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 the 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, the continuation and application of the developed project resources are 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 offered by European HE lecturers is published and available at the project website - https://digitalsocialimpact.eu/ and on our social networks (Twitter and LinkedIn)! Feel free to 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 clear barriers and drivers in creating and implementing courses that aim to convey content and create social impact.

IO2 - Development of the '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 that 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 and giving suggestions for digital tools, course structures, and further information points. Check out the final version: https://digitalsocialimpact.eu/course-configurator/

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

The project's third phase, 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 organizations, collected feedback and used this to refine the configurator. The leaders of this project phase were the University of Ljubljana (UL) and the Institute for Innovation and Development (IRI UL). Project team members 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. As a result of comments from our social partners, the website is also available in different languages (English (primary language), German, Slovenian, and Croatian).

IO4 – Continuation phase

IO4 was led by the University of Josip Juraj Strossmayer in Osijek and created a workshop concept and application guidelines for European academics in HEIs. This phase attracts more academics, enabling them to use the configurator and scale the project to the European level. The final phase included preparing course templates, creating workshops, and disseminating the previous two items. Four project partners (MUAS, UL, IRI UL, UNIOS) organized national multiplier events (National launch day) following the prepared roadmap, agenda, and presentation. After the event, all project partners got replies from the participants in which they evaluated the course configurator and multiplier event. Based on the whole multiplier event, every partner prepared a report based on the prepared report template. As a second part of the continuation phase, UO has prepared a guideline for using the course configurator that will be available on the project's website together with the video guideline prepared by Momentum and will also be available on the project website.

The third and final part of the continuation phase is course templates. The course templates result from course configurator use by project partners and their social partners during phases 3 and 4 of the project. 20 different course templates can help HE lecturers create social impact using digital technology.

Team Project Meeting

In late March 2023, the Digital Social Impact (DSI) project team held a fifth project meeting, for the third time in person, in Muenster, Germany. The topics included information on the project's IO3 phase and current IO4 phase.

Partner looked at IO3 test results and the previously created snag list for the project's website, where the course configurator can be found. Partners reviewed and corrected most of the snags based on the received feedback. The course configurator was tested both internally and externally. The website is now available in different languages (English (primary language), German, Slovenian, and Croatian).

As part of the IO4, partners looked at the first versions of prepared documents regarding the dissemination and scaling of the course configurator. Based on the received feedback, UO will improve the document and upload them to the project MS Teams repository so all partners can start preparing national multiplier events.

Project partners discussed the organization of the national multiplier events and other project-related topics (project management, timesheets, etc.). As the last part of the meeting, partners discussed the project's sustainability after the project is officially finished at the end of May 2023.
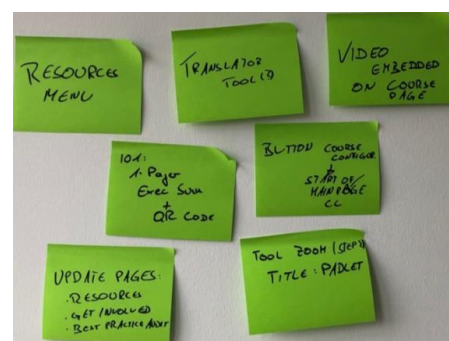
03 | COURSE TEMPLATES

During the course configurator testing period, the project team used it for the teaching activities and courses at the project partner's institutions. Based on the project team's experience, 20 different course templates have been created, and they are available on our webpage and ready to use under the resource tab. These course templates were tested in classrooms at project partners' institutions.

On the project website, everyone can find twenty course template PDF files we have created. You can download them and use them in your classes, or test them to find how the configurator works, or finally, one can create his/her course with the help of the templates the project team has prepared.

The templates are available [here](#).

04 | PROJECT DISSEMINATION

The project team organized and implemented several dissemination activities during the last six months. All activities were presented on the project's social networks.

Project presentation at an innovation exhibition in Osijek, October 12-14, 2022
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 the Faculty of Economics in Osijek presented activities and results of the DSI project.

Article in Suvremena trgovina 1/2023
UO has published an article in Suvremena trgovina journal, presenting the project as one of the tools with which UO can fight the migration problems in Eastern Slavonia, Croatia. The article is available [here](#) (only in Croatian).

UIIN Conference Budapest – May 11, 2023
FH Münster had the opportunity to share research insights from our [Digital Social Impact](#) project at the UIIN conference in Budapest. UIIN conference targets researchers and practitioners interested in the exchange of

knowledge on university-industry and university-society interactions.

Dominik Lappenküper shared the research insights of the Best Practice Audit with like-minded lecturers and university stakeholders, discussing various forms of social impact teaching and service learning approaches.

National launch Croatia – May 23, 2023

National Launch Croatia was organized on May 23, 2023, to publicly showcase the project's intellectual outputs and increase the visibility and uptake of our outputs amongst the most relevant stakeholder organizations. It was organized and led by the University of Osijek (UO) and carried out according to a Multiplier Event framework developed by UO.

The national launch Croatia multiplier event was attended by 40 participants, such as HE lecturers and educators, especially those motivated to engage in social projects and improve their digital competencies. During the multiplier event, the UO team presented project intellectual outputs and invited attendees to download and read the Best practice output, which was the basis for the course configurator. The UO team presented the configurator and used the video guidelines available on the project website to familiarize the attendees with how the course configurator works.

All attendees tried the course configurator to create potential courses for their use. Based on their feedback, they expressed interest in future use for their purposes.
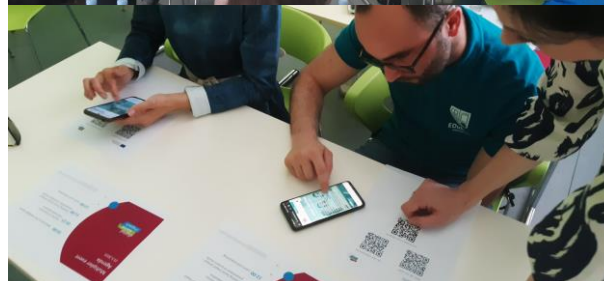
National launch Germany – May 25, 2023

On May 25, 2023, FM Muenster shared project's outputs with a diverse audience of both national and international lecturers, social entrepreneurs, and students. The event was a remarkable platform for knowledge exchange and

collaboration. The project's outputs, including the best practice audit, the digital course configurator, and course templates, were presented, igniting enthusiasm and sparking discussions among attendees. Especially among social entrepreneurs and lecturers, different use cases of service learning and other implementations of social impact teaching were ideated upon.

FH Muenster project team is proud to contribute to advancing the integration of social elements in higher education in Germany and Europe and equip educators with necessary tools to create lasting impact. They extend their heartfelt gratitude to all the passionate individuals who joined them in this event and showed support. The participants engagement and dedication fuel the project mission to drive positive change through digital means.

National launch Slovenia – May 29, 2023

The Slovenian partners @ IRI UL and @University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts jointly organised the multiplier event. The event took place on 29 May in the Atrium of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts. More than 60 people participated.

The project partners presented the aims and ambitions of the project and its final results. In the second part of the meeting, the participants took part in a workshop on the use of the configurator. The reactions were encouraging, as the Configurator was perceived as a very useful set of digital tools and participatory methods. The last part of the event provided space for networking among the participants.

04 | PROJECT TEAM

FH MÜNSTER
University of Applied Sciences

IRI UL
Institute for Innovation and Development of University of Ljubljana

University of Ljubljana

momentum
[educate + innovate]

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