



 -ChallengHE  
Digital Challenge in Higher Education

# D-ChallengHE Newsletter

## Issue no. 4

June 2024





## WP2 - D-ChallengHE HUB – European Digital Innovation Hub in HE

The D-ChallengHE HUB, in collaboration with [Skillman.eu](https://www.skillman.eu), has launched a dynamic initiative by establishing interdisciplinary research groups (RN). These groups unite individuals who share common interests, passions, and research objectives, fostering a fertile exchange of knowledge and virtuous collaboration. Key features include:

- Regularly organizing meetings among members.
- Open participation to all interested individuals.
- Playing a crucial role in animating the HE research observatory.

Each group is led by one or more coordinators who actively facilitate discussions and collaboration within the group. These research networks are strategically focused to inspire individuals and facilitate effective work on specific topics and meetings are conducted in a well-organized workshop setting, promoting active participation, intellectual debate, and the free exchange of ideas.

Presently, there are seven active groups within the HUB. The platform welcomes the formation of new groups and encourages interested parties to submit a program of activities, along with the names of promoters and brief biographies, as a means to promote inclusivity and expansion within the interdisciplinary research community.

[At this link it is possible to join one of our research networks.](#)

The existing research groups are as follows:

- **RN.1 New Role of HEIs in Front of Globalisation and Global Crises. Values, Mission And Goals For The Future Of HEIs**

Coordinator: Stefania Capogna

- **RN.2 Artificial Intelligence in HEIs**

Coordinators: Simona Velea, Olimpius Istrate

- **RN.3 The Economic, Social And Ecological Sustainability Of Digital Transformation**

Coordinators: Ligita Simanskiene, Julija Melnikova, Erika Župerkienė

- **RN.4 Curriculum design and mismatch job supply demand, skills for a changing society**



Coordinators: Žan Dapčević, Natalija Žunko, Nina Gaube

- **RN.5 Soft skills for HE students, innovating teaching models, tools for supporting teaching and learning**

Coordinators: Dr Stefanos Armakolas, Fotis Lazarinis, Theodor Panagiotakopoulos

- **RN.6 Digital and emerging skills**

Coordinators: Dario Carrera, Michela Fiorese, Angela Macri

- **RN.7 Academic Research: ethical and methodological issues, Computational challenges for humanity**

Coordinator: Maria Chiara De Angelis

Furthermore, as an activity associated with the permanent Observatory, the partnership of the D-ChallengHE project is diligently gathering a comprehensive collection of contributions, scientific research, and conference proceedings connected to the thematic interests central to the project.

The primary objective is to establish a dedicated space within the project's website to collate all these works, which delve into the topic of the digital transition within the sphere of higher education. This initiative aims to explore and document the multifaceted implications of digital transformation, encompassing risks, best practices, and continuous education.

By creating this repository, the project aspires to facilitate a robust understanding and dissemination of knowledge pertaining to how digital advancement is reshaping higher education. The insights gathered are intended to serve as valuable resources for academics, practitioners, and policymakers striving to navigate the complexities and opportunities associated with digitalization in educational contexts. This endeavor is not merely a passive collection but an active engagement with contemporary research and discussions, thereby ensuring that the digital transition is approached with informed strategies that mitigate risks and enhance educational practices.

Link to the repository: <https://d-challenghe.unilink.it/observatory/>



Contributions should be indicated within [this file](#) and sent as a PDF to [dites.progetti@unilink.it](mailto:dites.progetti@unilink.it).

## Final Conference

### *European Digital Innovation Hub in Higher Education (HE)*

*14 June 2024*

**Sustainability Principles in Conference Organization.** In organising the conference, a strong emphasis was placed on sustainability principles. Given that "digital" is a key aspect of the conference title and project, efforts were made to minimise the use of printed materials and instead use digital documents for programs, announcements, and presentations. QR codes were utilised to share information, further reducing paper waste. At the conference venue, waste sorting containers were provided to enable participants to sort their waste into categories such as plastic, paper, metal, glass, and organic waste. Local food products were used to minimise the carbon footprint associated with food transportation. Sustainable and eco-friendly products were chosen for participant welcome gifts and badges; adhesive participant badges were used instead of plastic ones. Participants were encouraged to join remotely to reduce the environmental impact of travel. Over 80 participants attended the conference, with a significant number joining online.

#### **The Program**

9:30–10:00 - Registration. Participants arrived at 9:30 AM for registration, which was efficiently managed, allowing attendees to network over coffee.

10:00–10:10 - Welcome Prof. Dr. Erika Župerkienė (Klaipeda University) opened the conference, presenting its goals and the principles on which it was organised. She highlighted one of the project's key achievements – establishing a Higher Education Professionals Hub where researchers can collaborate on various higher education development topics.

10:10–10:30 - Presentation by Prof. Dr. Stefania Capogna (Link Campus University). Prof. Dr. Stefania Capogna introduced the concept, purpose, and goals of the D-ChallengHE HUB, a European Digital Innovation Hub in Higher Education, and discussed the research themes pursued within the HUB.



10:30–10:50 - Presentation by Nina Gaube (Academia Higher Education Colleges University of Ljubljana). Nina Gaube presented the results of WP 3 of the project: a developed training program and an interactive platform for innovative online teaching in HE. She invited interested participants to register for the training and demonstrated how the platform works with a video.

10:50–11:10 - Presentation by Dr. Olimpius Istrate (University of Bucharest). Dr. Olimpius Istrate provided insights into the development and impact of AI on higher education. His presentation garnered significant interest and prompted numerous questions and discussions from the participants.

11:10–11:30—Presentation by Roberto Vardisio (CEO of Entropy Knowledge Network). Roberto Vardisio discussed "Engagement Tools for Tutors and Learners in a HE Online Learning Environment: Serious Game." He explored various engagement tools and their applications in online learning environments.

11:30–11:50 - Presentation by Simona Velea and Dr. Olimpius Istrate (University of Bucharest). Simona Velea and Dr. Olimpius Istrate co-presented on "Guidelines for Online and Blended Learning: Design, Delivery, Assessment, Evaluation of Study Programmes," providing comprehensive guidelines for effective online and blended learning programs.

13:00–15:00 - Practical Session. The afternoon was dedicated to practical activities. Gerasimos Vonitsanos and Roberto Vardisio presented how a serious game is developed, the challenges faced by tutors and students, and how to involve them in the creation of the serious game. Participants engaged in hands-on workshops, applying the concepts discussed during the morning presentations.

15:00–15:30 - Round Table Discussion. Gerasimos Vonitsanos (Hellenic Open University) and Roberto Vardisio and Olimpius Istrate led a round table discussion on the challenges of creating serious games. Participants actively asked questions and engaged in discussions about AI impact, serious game possibilities, and more.

The conference concluded with the distribution of certificates. Due to sustainability efforts, certificates were sent to participants via email.

The conference on European Digital Innovation Hub in Higher Education was successful, emphasizing sustainability and digital innovation. Participants praised the project's outcomes and expressed interest in developing similar projects and adopting similar practices in their own institutions.



## WP3 - Training for innovative online teaching in HE

### Celebrating the Successful Completion of the WP3 Pilot Training Program!

Through the Erasmus+ D-ChallengHE project, the project consortium has developed an innovative digital learning platform. This platform aims to empower higher education educators with the tools to excel in online teaching.

The platform offers three free courses:

- Soft and Communication Skills for Digital Teaching
- Online Teaching Methodologies
- Use of AI in Education

Besides the key output being the D-ChallengHE training platform, pilot delivery, training guides, and comprehensive evaluations and improvements were also implemented.

To ensure the highest quality and best user experience, the platform underwent comprehensive pilot testing, which concluded in June.

This phase engaged:

- over 600 participants
- 5 institutions
- across 5 countries (Italy, Lithuania, Romania, Greece, Slovenia)
- supported by 19 dedicated e-facilitators/trainers

Through this initiative, participants gained invaluable skills in digital transformation and innovative online teaching methods while expanding their professional networks. This phase provided valuable feedback, allowing us to make 25 corrections and continue refining the platform based on the participants' experiences and evaluations.

### Goals of Training for Innovative Teaching

The primary goals of the D-ChallengHE training program were to create an accessible platform that equips higher education educators with essential online teaching skills, to make the learning process seamless and self-paced, to test and evaluate the platform, and to offer the training to a broader audience. Our aim was to ensure that educators could smoothly transition between in-person and online learning environments, broadening their impact globally and accommodating diverse learning styles.

### Why Mastering Online Teaching is Important



Mastering online teaching is crucial in today's rapidly evolving educational landscape. It enables educators to adapt to digital transformations, broadening their reach to a global audience and fostering inclusivity. Furthermore, being proficient in online teaching prepares educators for future trends and unforeseen disruptions, ensuring they can navigate remote collaboration and technological advancements effectively.

### How to Enroll

We invite you to enhance your digital teaching skills by enrolling in our free courses. You can easily enroll by contacting us through the form on our website or by submitting your request through this special link for our newsletter readers: [Enrollment Form](#).

For a visual overview of the D-ChallengHE training platform, you can preview our video presentation [here](#).

Thank you to all the dedicated participants and trainers for making this program and pilot testing a success!

## WP4 - Engagement tools for tutors and learners in a HE online learning environment

One of the most important milestones of the D-ChallengHE project is the innovation of teaching and learning methods. The WP4, entitled '**Engagement tools for tutors and learners in a HE online learning environment**', aimed to develop tools to engage students and young researchers in higher education. The main objectives were

- To improve the digital skills of students, young researchers and tutors;
- The development of innovative methods and tools which can be integrated into online learning platforms used in higher education.

Entropy KN, a company specialised in the development of teaching methods based on the principles of Technology Enhanced Learning, supported the partners in the implementation of "serious games". These virtual simulations, similar to video games, allow the development of specific skills and abilities using the gamification methodology.

From November to February, all partners took part in an intensive training session. The main points of the training were:



- **Definition of SG objectives:** These objectives could be specific skills, concepts or attitudes that the players needed to acquire. Once the learning objectives were defined, it was important to identify specific behaviours that could indicate the possession of these skills and use them to create the story.
- **Concept definition:** The partners worked on the definition of the setting, the characters and the narrative model of the serious game. A summary document containing all the basic information for the implementation of the serious game was created with the support of the Entropy tutors.
- **Design of the storyboard and insertion of the game into the editor:** Following a pre-established template, the partners were then engaged in writing the storyboard, describing in detail each step of the game and each planned interaction. In the phase of inserting the game into the editor, they were guided and supported by both EKN tutors and a detailed manual.

Thanks to this first training phase, the whole consortium was able to replicate the activity with their students. Today, we are close to the end of this work package: the serious games are currently being developed and, thanks to the commitment of all partners, we have managed to involve more than 200 people so far.

### Next steps

We will now focus on gathering feedback from teachers and students to make improvements and further refine the methodology. We will also focus on writing a guide in which Entropy KN will summarise the model for creating SGs. The report will be divided into two parts: an operational part and an experiential part.

By completing these crucial steps, we are paving the way for a transformative approach to higher education, ensuring that our innovative methods continue to evolve and inspire future generations of learners and educators.

## WP5 - Guidelines for online and blended learning: design, delivery, assessment, evaluation of study programmes

The 5th work package spans until the end of August 2024, building useful recommendations for higher education teaching staff. The Guidelines are based on the availability and the increased experience with specific infrastructure, such as: LMS, labs,





virtual collaborative communities (for various roles), VR & AR, digital resources – videos, simulations, exercises, quizzes –, online courses, blended learning paths, collaborative asynchronous learning, analytics, intelligent agents/ assistants. The drafting of the Guidelines is closely following the DigCompEdu framework proposed by the European Commission (2017, [joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/digcompedu\\_en](https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/digcompedu_en)), on six areas of interest:

1. Professional Engagement (organisational communication; professional collaboration; reflective practice; digital CPD)
2. Digital Resources (selecting, creating and modifying; managing, protecting and sharing)
3. Teaching and Learning (teaching; guidance; collaborative learning; self-regulated learning)
4. Assessment (~ strategies; analysing evidence; feedback and planning)
5. Empowering Learners (accessibility and inclusion; differentiation and personalisation; actively engaging learners)
6. Facilitating Learners' Digital Competence (information and media literacy; digital communication and collaboration; content creation; responsible use; problem solving)

It is also focused on innovative pedagogies, especially on:

- Pedagogies using AI tools
- Multimodal pedagogy
- Pedagogy of care in digitally mediated settings
- Using chatbots in learning/ Learning with robots
- Watch parties
- Enriched realities
- Entangled pedagogies of learning spaces
- Corpus-based pedagogy
- Challenge-based learning
- Pedagogy of autonomy
- Best learning moments
- Seeing yourself in the curriculum
- Relational pedagogies

### **How to benefit from WP5- Guidelines**

The main takeaways will be disseminated within the Hub, via specific channels. If requested by the Hub community, a thorough presentation and discussions will be organised in September.

Stay tuned, join the Hub!

[Enrol](#) in one or more research networks!



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