PROJECT NEWSLETTER

September 2020

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ESCALATE

The ESCALATE project was the subject of a successful application to Key Action 2 – Cooperation for Innovation and the Exchange of Good Practices – of the Erasmus+ programme submitted by UNIVERSITATEA DE VEST DIN TIMIȘOARA to the Romanian National Agency.

The official start of the ESCALATE project is 01.11.2019 and it is a 24-months project with the end date being 31.10.2021.

Project Summary

Project Partners (Consortium)

UNIVERSITATEA DE VEST DIN TIMIȘOARA –
Applicant Organization (Lead Partner)

UNIVERSITY OF EXETER

UNIVERSITY OF STIRLING

UNIVERSITA' DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

OTTO-VON-GUERICKE-UNIVERSITY MAGDEBURG

PROSPEKTIKER INSTITUTO EUROPEO DE
PROSPECTIVA Y ESTRATEGIA SA

Total grant amount: 230,480.00 EUR

Project aim

To assist universities in implementing activities designed to increase the levels of digital competences for employability, upskilling, according with a growing range of employment generated by the digital economy, aligned with the needs of and opportunities offered by the labour market and linked to professional profiles.

Specific objectives

- To understand '"university disruption" at regional and local levels and the threats posed to universities and labour market from digitalization;
- To identify who are the educational institutions and organizations involved and what innovations can be employed to help understand and tackle digitalization impacts;
- To elicit more effective local and regional higher education institutions' responses to digitalization across Europe.

Activities and intellectual outputs

The project Coordinated higher institutions responses to digitalization (ESCALATE) delivers 4 Intellectual Outputs (IOs) which consist of:

• IO1 - Higher education institutions/Universities Responses to Digitalization – European Compendium
• IO2 – New Foresighting, Forecasting and Digital Analysis Materials
• IO3 – Digital Skills Escalator Development
• IO4 – Higher education institutions/Universities Responses to Digitalization – Training Course

Experts and researchers from all project partners have extensively worked during the latest months, in parallel, on the first three intellectual outputs.

The work for IO1 – Higher education institutions/ Universities Responses to Digitalization – European Compendium is almost complete.

University of Milano-Bicocca Italy leads this output production which is a research endeavour that requires a partner in each country (West University of Timisoara in Romania, Exeter and Stirling in UK, OVGU Magdeburg in Germany and Prospektiker in Spain) to analyze the following:

• The potential impact of digitalization on their own (sub)region
• Current policy and educational/univer-

sities responses
• Gaps in understanding
• Gaps in provision
• Gaps in Policy Response
• Universities, Employers and Social Partner responses and drivers
• Good practice identified locally and nationally
• (lead partner only) Good practice identified internationally

Deadline for final publication of this first intellectual output is 30 November 2020.

There are important advances also in terms of the second intellectual output – IO2 – New Foresighting, Forecasting and Digital Analysis Materials.

This output is led by Prospektiker and aims to develop innovative training materials for university leaders/responsible, educators/teachers and learners, labour market practitioners and analysts to help forecast and foresight of the need for digitalization and its impact (especially in terms of the use of digital technology in the educational process). The materials will be developed to embrace new concepts and principles resulting directly from digitalization.

Moreover, essential research has been deployed also as regards the third intellectual output – IO3 – Digital Skills Escalator Development.

This Output is led by The University of Exeter with considerable input in each transnational (sub) region. Exeter will summarize existing practices and lessons learned from the work developing the Exeter Digital Escalator and pass this onto partners who will then build policy and stakeholder relationships to enable testing of the model.

All partners have started to map their Digital Skills Pipeline (education provided from school age to the workplace and include academic and vocational qualifications at all levels). They will compare the use of the Exeter Digital Escalator with similar innovations in their region to prevent 'reinventing the wheel' – though we believe there to be no parallel developments given our initial research. The partners will then map existing provision and education providers to form a new (sub) Regional Escalator model. They will then develop and disseminate the findings to policymakers and stakeholders who will be responsible, ultimately, for filling any gaps in provision.

1st Meeting in Milan, Italy

The host institution of the first transnational project meeting held within the framework of the Coordinated higher institutions responses to digitalization (ESCALATE) project was CRISP – University of Milano-Bicocca and the meeting was organized jointly with the lead partner West University of Timisoara.
The meeting took place on 24 January 2020, and the location of the meeting was Universita' Milano – Bicocca, Building U7 – Via Bicocca Degli Arcimboldi, Milano, Italy.

Objectives of the meeting

• Reviewing the Project Handbook (project's objectives, structure, outcomes, practical and administrative issues, financial regulations and reporting requirements)

• Agree the focus for State-of-the-Art research - led by University of Milano-Bicocca

• Agree a methodology and framework for capturing and reporting the State-of-the-Art

• Share information on known good practices

• Explore how best to ensure sustainable and lasting project impact

• Explore how best to build policy and stakeholder relationships for the Escalator developments

2nd Meeting online

While countries all over the world face massive health risks and subsequent economic risks due to the negative consequences of coronavirus especially on the global trade, travel and tourism industries, but also on the labor markets since millions of jobs are endangered, a new debate is opened on the essential role that the digital economy and digital skills play in ensuring the sustainability of the national economic systems, making the ESCALATE project even more relevant.
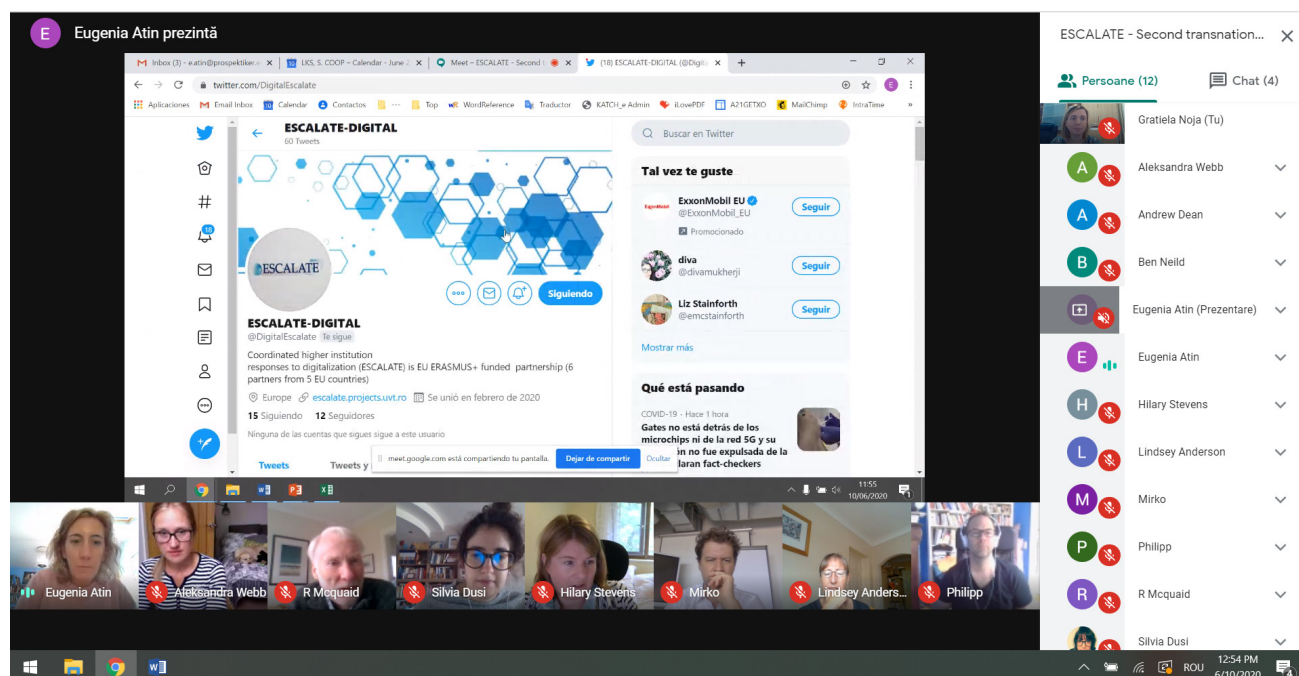
Therefore, considering the current challenging pandemic times, the severe impact on the global economy and the global public health risks brought by the coronavirus (covid-19) epidemic, the second transnational partner meeting that was initially scheduled to be held in Exeter, UK, was held online via Google Hangouts Meet, on 10 June 2020.

The meeting was organized by the lead partner West University of Timisoara, jointly with all partners and, particularly, with University of Exeter.

Objectives of the meeting:
a). Review draft State-of-the-Art Reports, make recommendations for final content and innovative practices that could be built-on within Thematic work;
b). Scope out the next 6 parallel

Transnational Project Meetings

phases of materials development and creation. Discuss and confirm the content of the modules and confirm the structure for the Final Synthesis;

c). Discuss Exeter suggestions regarding work on IO3 including:

i. Devise the methodology(s) for implementation of the Escalator by/with Policymakers in all partner countries

ii. Comparing the use of the Exeter Digital Escalators with similar innovations

iii. Mapping the regional escalator elements in other partner regions

iv. Devise the report structure for both the Partner reporting and the Digital Escalator Summary Report

d). Conclude evaluation methodologies to analyze the new materials

Numerous discussions and online meetings were held with the project partners throughout the project timeline to ensure a proper implementation of the activities, with a keen focus on research and the production of intellectual outputs.

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