

# BeyondScale

## Mid-term conference proceedings

23rd of March, 2021



## *The Power of Peer-learning and Change Management during a Pandemic*



Co-funded by the  
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of the European Union

This document is issued as a conference proceeding, it intends to document the presentations and make them available for the public. BeyondScale has the aim to develop the organizational capacity of higher education institutions using the HEInnovate platform to strongly support peer-learning and a pan-European community of practice.

The conference was hosted virtually by the University of Ruse “Angel Kanchev”, the BeyondScale team expresses the gratitude towards the University of Ruse and its representatives for their effort and hosting the conference.

The BeyondScale team thanks the speakers, participants, and attendees for their valuable contribution and presence, without them, the conference would not have been possible.

## Disclaimer



This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



## Conference Programme

### Welcome Speech - 13:30

[Brigitte Ecker](#), WPZ Research, Austria

[Barbara Hermans](#), Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), European Commission

[Ivana Radonova](#), Ministry of Education, Bulgaria

[Ruaidhri Neavyn](#), Higher Education Authority of Ireland (HEA), Ireland

BeyondScale presentation –13:40

[Brigitte Ecker](#), WPZ Research, Austria

### I Session - Keynote speakers - 13:50

[Hristo Beloev](#), Diana Antonova, University of Ruse – Ruse University activities in COVID-19 environment

[Frank Ziegele](#), CHE Center for Higher Education – Digital transformation & peer-learning

[Karl-Heinz Leitner](#), Austrian Institute of Technology & University of Graz – Transformation through strategic foresight

[Zsuzsa Javorka](#), Technopolis Group - HEInnovate future outlook

Q/A discussion

### II Session - Presentations – 14:40

[Bárbara Coelho Gabriel](#), University of Aveiro – THEI 2.0

[Susanna Boldrino](#), FH Campus Wien – BeyondScale inbound perspective

[Helen McGuirk](#), Munster Technological University (MTU) – BeyondScale Outbound perspective

[Ben Jongbloed](#), [Andrea Kottmann](#), Center for Higher Education Policy Studies (CHEPS) – The Accompanying research of BeyondScale

Q/A discussion

### Closing part – 15:20

Future plans & closing



## Welcome Session

Brigitte Ecker welcomed the audience on behalf of the BeyondScale and WPZ Research team and showed appreciation to the hosts - University of Ruse “Angel Kanchev”.

After Brigitte Ecker, Barbara Hermans took the opportunity to welcome the audience on behalf of the Education, Audiovisual, and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Barbara Hermans shared the fresh news that the agency will change the name to “European Education and Culture Executive Agency”, although the acronym remains the same. Besides, Barbara Hermans set the context that her unit focuses on forward-looking, civil society and inclusion projects, thus mainly the projects which are connected to policy reforms and Third Pillar of Erasmus +. Barbara Hermans underlined the importance of the HEInnovate as a self-reflection tool for higher education institutions. She emphasized that their agency supports further development of the HEInnovate tool and similar to the BeyondScale, several projects were funded in 2019. At the end of her speech, Barbara Hermans reinforced the power of networking events and meetings amid the pandemic to address common challenges and learn from experiences.

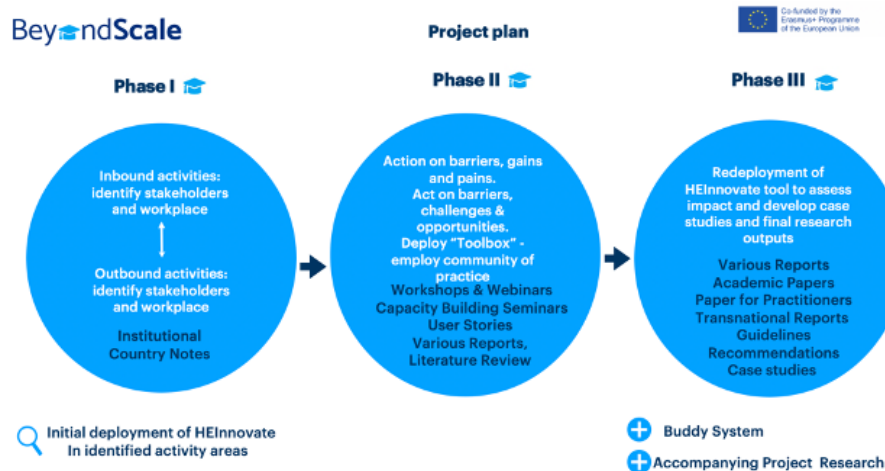
Ivana Radonova, the representative of the Ministry of Education of Bulgaria continued greetings and warm reception. She recalled the time when HEInnovate was introduced in Bulgaria in 2014 as an initiative, which developed into the powerful platform and enhanced collaboration among ministries, universities, organizations, and various accreditation bodies on national and European levels. Ivana Radonova stressed the importance of the conference for higher education policymakers and practitioners to reflect and make decisions.

The welcoming session was closed by Ruaidhri Neavyn, a representative of the Higher Education Authority of Ireland and associate partner of the BeyondScale project. Ruaidhri Neavyn expressed gratitude to the University of Ruse for accommodating the participants virtually. Ruaidhri Neavyn highlighted that although pandemic brought several challenges, the BeyondScale project continues working in the digital environment. Ruaidhri Neavyn drew attention to the interaction and collaboration between higher education institutions and external stakeholders, and the “Buddy System” developed in the BeyondScale project is the promising concept to strengthen collaboration and peer-learning among various internal and external stakeholders. At the end of his speech, Ruaidhri Neavyn mentioned value proposition canvas, a novel way for higher education institutions to address stakeholders’ engagement using the HEInnovate dimension.



Presenter - Brigitte Ecker  
WPZ Research  
Topic - BeyondScale presentation

Brigitte Ecker made an introductory presentation for the audience to keep abreast of the BeyondScale project. Brigitte Ecker explained that BeyondScale is seeking to create a pan-European community of practice that will share and document emerging good practices, based on the outcomes of the individual and collaborative activities of the participants. BeyondScale utilizes the HEInnovate self-assessment platform to drive entrepreneurial and innovative change. The project consists of nine higher education institutions from five EU countries.



Core to BeyondScale is a buddy system in which partners engage in a peer-learning mechanism, that will allow partner HEIs to co-design and work together on delivering on inbound and outbound activities and thus increasing their collective entrepreneurship capacity and capability. The HEI-Buddy-Teams provide a novel way of organizing peer-learning among project partners that come from different institutions, each with a broad range of external stakeholders. Objectives of the buddy system include developing collaborative design and evaluation of approaches to:

- removing institutional barriers to enhance inbound and outbound entrepreneurial activity;
- creating transnational opportunities for entrepreneurial learning, in general, but also in social entrepreneurship;
- enhancing the impact of these activities on the learner;
- strengthening quality improvement and assurance mechanisms.

Lessons and good practices to be shared:

- across the project partners;
- across other FLP partners;
- across the networks, our partners are part of.



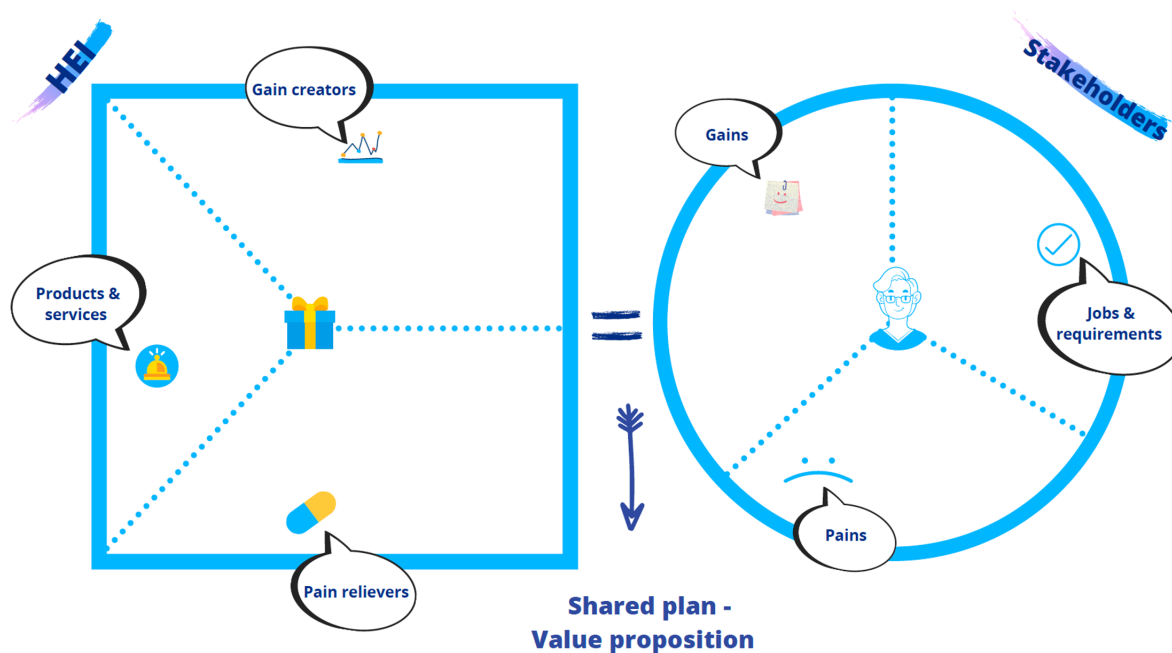
Levels of the buddy system:

- internal HEI buddy system (inbound);
- external buddy system (outbound);
- inter HEI buddy system;
- associate partner HEI buddy system;
- mentor buddy system.

Brigitte Ecker also emphasized the Value Proposition Workshop, which is a new workshop format model that was developed combining the approaches of the business canvas model with the HEInnovate tool. Value proposition workshop enables higher education institutions to collaborate with stakeholders in a structured way. The value canvas approach allows to identify and map institutional barriers, pains, and gains to generate a work plan between HEIs and stakeholders.

## HEInnovate Value Proposition Canvas

Dimension:

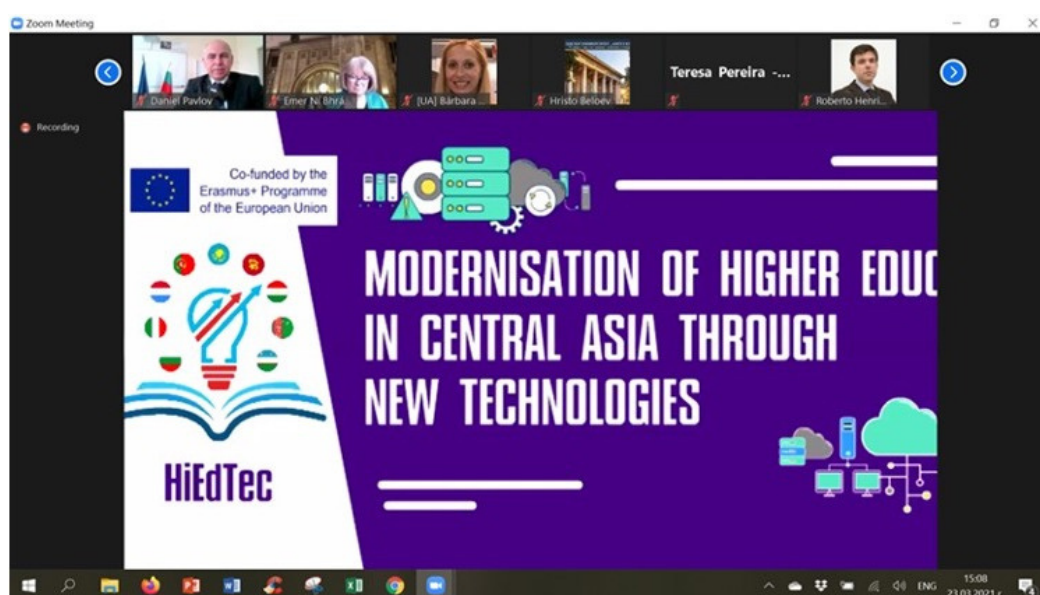


Keynote Speaker - Prof. Dr. Hristo Beloev

University of Ruse "Angel Kanchev"

Topic - "Ruse university activities in Covid-19 environment"

The first session was opened by the Rector of the University of Ruse, Prof. Hristo Beloev who welcomed the audience. The Rector, Prof. Hristo Beloev underlined that during a pandemic, the University of Ruse managed to respond to the environmental constraints swiftly, they re-set all the system into the electronic medium, and they started to produce shields and other protective equipment for the medical workers at the front line. The Rector, Prof. Hristo Beloev set the scene regarding digitalization and explained that the University of Ruse created its e-learning platform – e-learning Shell, which entails several online courses, lectures, and virtual laboratory. Besides, a concept for the Digital Transformation and Vision for the University of the Future was developed in the University. The University of Ruse is part of the Eurasian project which connects various universities and offers a virtual library in Innovation Educational Technologies, and due to the pandemic, the resources became available for the larger audience.



The virtual library HiEdTec



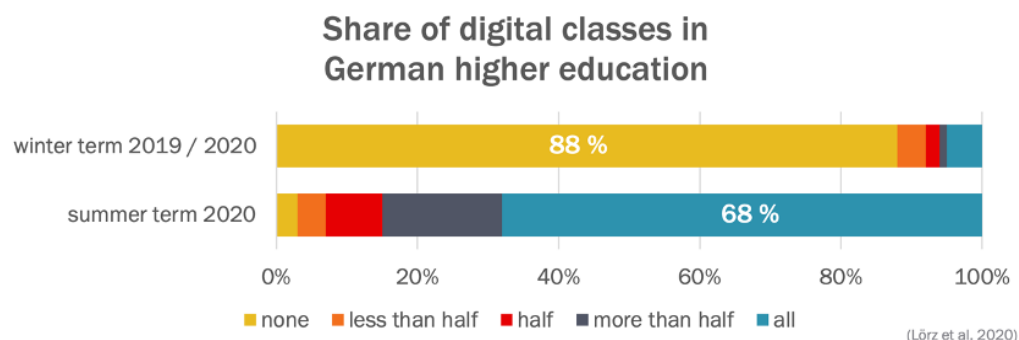
The Rector Prof. Hristo Beloev gave an exquisite example of how the university's innovative and forward-looking spirit enables the smooth institutional transformation in the period of turbulence, and how to be prepared to meet societal needs as part of the third mission.

Keynote Speaker - Prof. Dr. Frank Ziegele

CHE Center for Higher Education"

Topic - "Digital transformation & peer-learning"

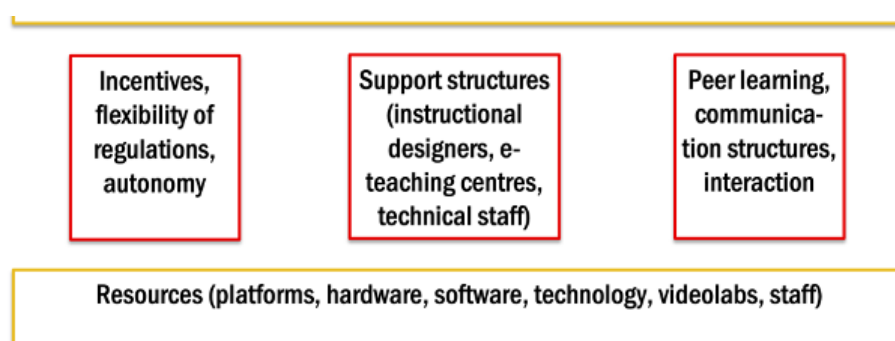
Prof. Frank Ziegele focused on how pandemic caused massive transition to digitalization within the higher education institutions, which was supported by recent studies conducted in Germany.



Prof. Frank Ziegele underlined that there was technical support available by the higher education institutions, although internal structures for peer-learning were not in place. As for the students, it seems they were mostly dissatisfied by the didactical concepts and motivating methods, which were applied during the online classes.

Accordingly, Prof. Frank Ziegele presented the five enablers for digital transformation in the pandemic situation:

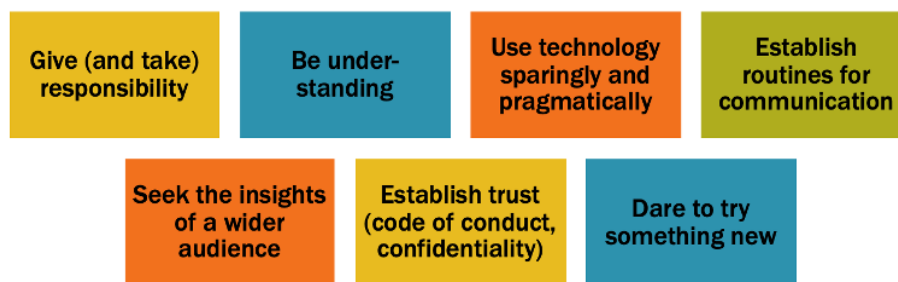
1. Strategy – teaching profile, joint goals, openness for joint approaches, practices to talk about T+L (teaching and learning)
2. Incentives, flexibility of regulations, autonomy
3. Support structures (institutional designers, e-teaching centers, technical staff)
4. Peer-learning, communication structures, interaction
5. Resources (platforms, hardware, software, technology, video labs, staff)



Peer-learning within the university is exhibited in two ways:

1. **Synchronous** (informal exchanges, e.g., virtual lunch breaks to foster communication; semi-formal formats, where a topic is introduced, but no preparation is required by attendees; online workshops that contain more structured input and concrete learning goal).
2. **Asynchronous** (recordings of workshops; good practice collections, testimonials; expert's talks and blogs, although the presenter warned the audience that there is a danger of demotivating gap between pioneers and "normal").

Seven success factors of a peer learning projects (from community of practice - AEDiL) are:



Insights by Prof. Frank Ziegele:

- “Focus digital transformation not only on technical issues, but on didactics, motivating and inspiring settings, etc. – Peer-learning helps a lot with these issues.”
- “Peer-learning is needed: inevitable, pragmatic and quick, but complementary and not alternative to support structures.”
- “Strike a balance between peer-learning and support. Both are valuable and not is the time to assess their respective and complementary uses.”
- “Change the culture of not talking about T+L practices, as peer -earning could work for an exchange about T+L practices also beyond online learning.
- “Use peer-learning to strengthen T+L, develop joint approaches. The digital transformation is a window of opportunity to move forward.”
- “Seize the opportunity. Use the experiences of past year’s continuous peer-learning to shape the “new normal.”

Prof. Frank Ziegele highly stressed the importance and empowering nature of peer-learning in the wake of forced transformation, to facilitate T+L and simplify the process for teaching staff. Digitalization can be nurtured and adopted in a way that fits the institutional culture and enhances T+L practices. Today, higher education institutions have the opportunity to shape and customize the “new normal”.

Further references available in German are:

1. [Resource](#)
2. [Resource](#)
3. [Resource](#)
4. [Resource](#)



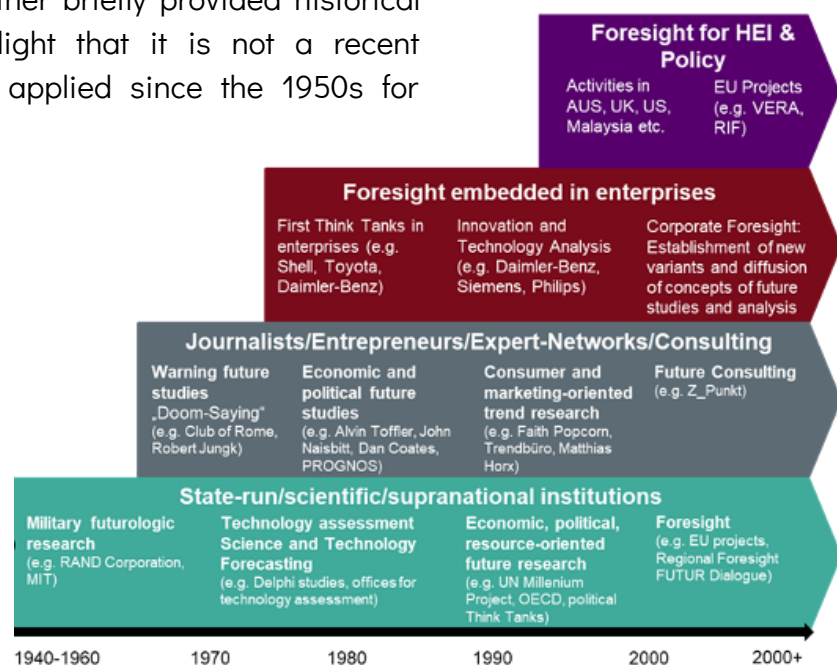


Keynote Speaker - Prof. Dr. Karl-Heinz Leitner

Austrian Institute of Technology & University of  
Graz

Topic - "Transformation through strategic  
foresight"

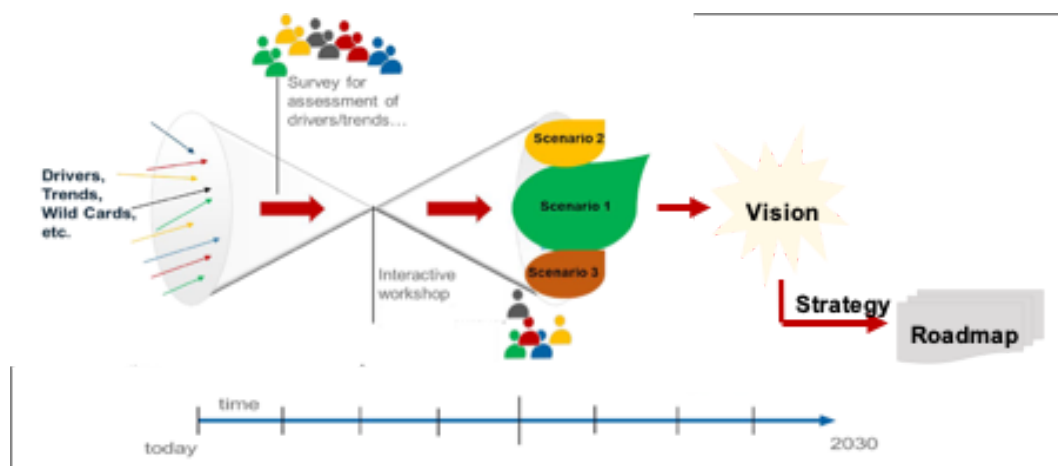
Prof. Karl-Heinz Leitner speaker continued the theme of transformation and explored strategic foresight as an instrument for the future development of higher education institutions. Prof. Karl-Heinz Leitner briefly provided historical discourse of foresight to highlight that it is not a recent instrument, rather it has been applied since the 1950s for military purposes.



Prof. Karl-Heinz explained to the audience, that foresight is not about predicting the future, but about shaping the future. Through this tool it is possible to develop multiple futures (e.g. scenarios) and adopt a long-term view. Foresight considers several factors, such as social, economic, technological, environmental, political, and so on. This process is highly participatory and encourages the involvement of internal and external stakeholders.

Common foresight methods are:

- Trend analysis and environmental scanning
- Scenario development and assessment
- Visioning
- Delphi
- Roadmapping



As follow-up, Prof. Karl-Heinz Leitner has discussed different examples from academia when foresight methodology was deployed (Bialystok Technical University, Ejdy et al., 2019; The Liberal Arts Academy's Future, Klarkula & Irwin, 2020)

### Insights by Prof. Karl-Heinz Leitner:

- “Strategic foresight allows mobilizing individuals across the entire organization”
- “Strategic foresight particularly allows developing post-pandemic scenarios”
- “Strategic foresight can explicitly focus on the question how Third Mission activities can be strengthened”

In the light of increased uncertainty and complexity, foresight is the tool to look into the future. Foresight allows higher education institutions to leverage change and transformation on their terms and with their pace.

Keynote Speaker - Zsuzsa Javorka

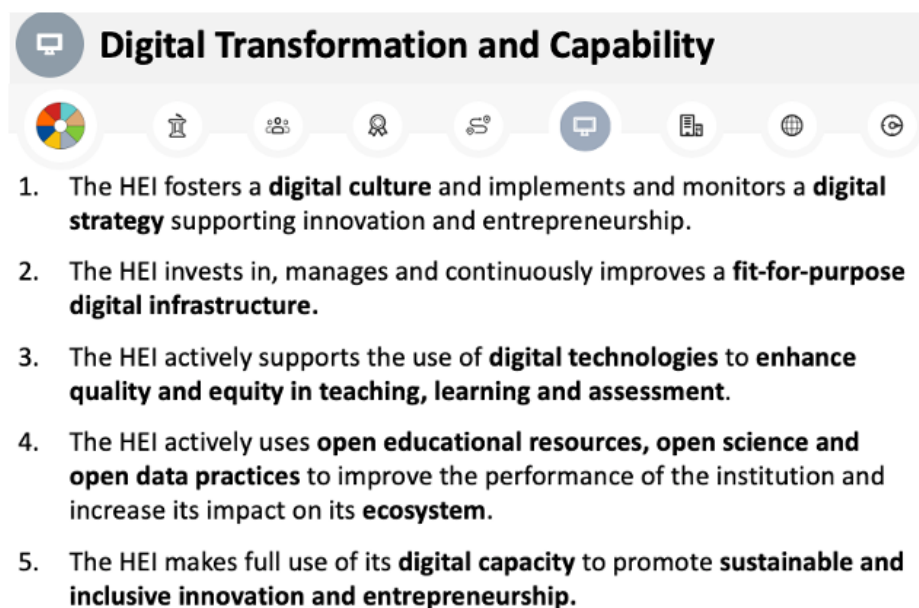
Technopolis Group

Topic - "HEInnovate future outlook"

Zsuzsa Javorka continued the theme of transformation from the HEInnovate tool perspective, and she focused on the respective changes. To set the scene, the presenter highlighted some interesting data for the starters:

- The official launch of the HEInnovate tool was on the 18th of November 2013
- Around 20K users have completed the self-assessment (SA) up to now
- Over 1,300 HEIs have completed SA from 80+ countries
- There are almost 20K registered users
- Over 100 different supporting materials, reports, case studies, and videos are available
- More than 50 workshops and training events have been recorded

Zsuzsa Javorka explained the dimension of the digital transformation and capability, which proved to be a very important and critical one, during a pandemic. Thus, it was also necessary to adapt the statements.



In addition, Zsuzsa Javorka portrayed the future outlook of the HEInnovate, and she emphasize the directions that need to be maintained and enhanced.

Maintain:

- The relevance of the dimensions
- The expert group as a sounding board for the developments
- A broad range of supporting materials
- The series of online training sessions and webinars

Enhance:

- Synergies with other relevant initiatives (EPIC, EntreTime, UB Forum, HESS, and so on)
- The use of materials, especially case studies
- Restructure and revamp the website to make it even more user-friendly
- Communication building – monthly newsletter

Zsuzsa Javorka's insights were:

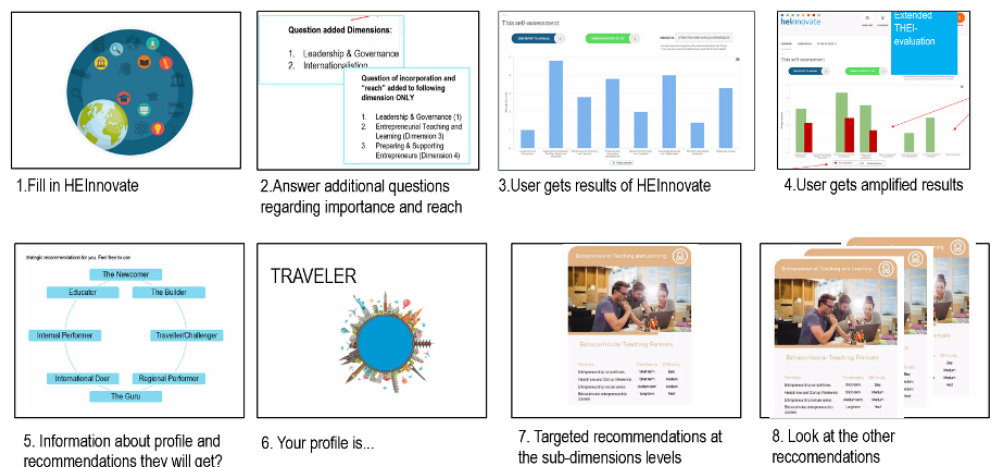
- Besides higher education institutions, self-assessment tools need to remain proactive and responsive to the changing environment to support institutional transformation better.
- Peer-learning also plays crucial role in the modernization and further improvement of the support tools, like HEInnovate.

Speaker - Barbara Gabriel

University of Aveiro

Topic - "Towards HEInnovate 2.0 from  
assessment to action"

Barbara Gabriel introduced the perspective of THEI2.0, which aims to create an augmented HEInnovate framework, to translate results of HEInnovate (in)to the recommendation of potential actions, to create and promote digital badges. THEI2.0 aims to bring gamification element to make the tool more engaging and to record user's progress



The ongoing steps of THEI2.0 are to pilot testing phase, develop the digital badges and disseminate project through different sources.

Speaker -Susanna Boldrino

FH Campus Wien

Topic - "BeyondScale Inbound Perspective:  
Peer-learning supports transformation"

Susanna Boldrino introduced working package 2 within the BeyondScale project, which intends to develop organizational capacity in light of the entrepreneurial agenda. Susanna Boldrino underlined that the way to facilitate learning is to strengthen a pan-European community of practices.

Between the BeyondScale project, a community of practice starts with sharing:

- Information
- Best practices
- Workshops
- Self-assessment
- Bilateral & project partner meetings
- Professional exchange and collaboration stimulated by Buddy System



### Experiences with Peer Learning – Lessons learned

#### Barriers

- Different laws, regulations, frameworks
- Language
- Limited time resources
- Confidential topics, competition

#### Enablers

- Professional know-how
- Personal trust
- Consideration of suggestions
- Mutual learning

Academic Institutional Development | Boldrino



### Insights by Susanna Boldrino:

- “Peers can minimize the risks of transformation”
- “Peers help to understand the transformation”

Speaker -Helen McGuirk

Munster Technological University

Topic - "BeyondScale outbound perspective"

Helen McGuirk reminded the audience that Working Package 3 focuses on the external engagement of HEIs and their regional environment. This objective builds on the idea of the learning region and how HEIs can be socially reflexive and stay relevant.


To accomplish the goals, a guideline for peer-learning activities on HEI's regional engagement will be issued, along with country notes and action plans. Special attention will be paid to improve collaboration for knowledge transfer of applied research and to showcase research activities.



. The WP3 is developed in line with the following HEInnovate dimensions:

- Entrepreneurial teaching and learning
- Knowledge exchange and collaboration
- Preparing and supporting entrepreneurs
- Digital transformation and capability

Helen McGuirk announced that the upcoming seminar will be organised on the 15th of April, 2021 and it will be dedicated to regionally engaged universities.



Speaker - Ben Jongbloed & Andrea Kottmann

Centre for Higher Education Policy Studies CHEPS

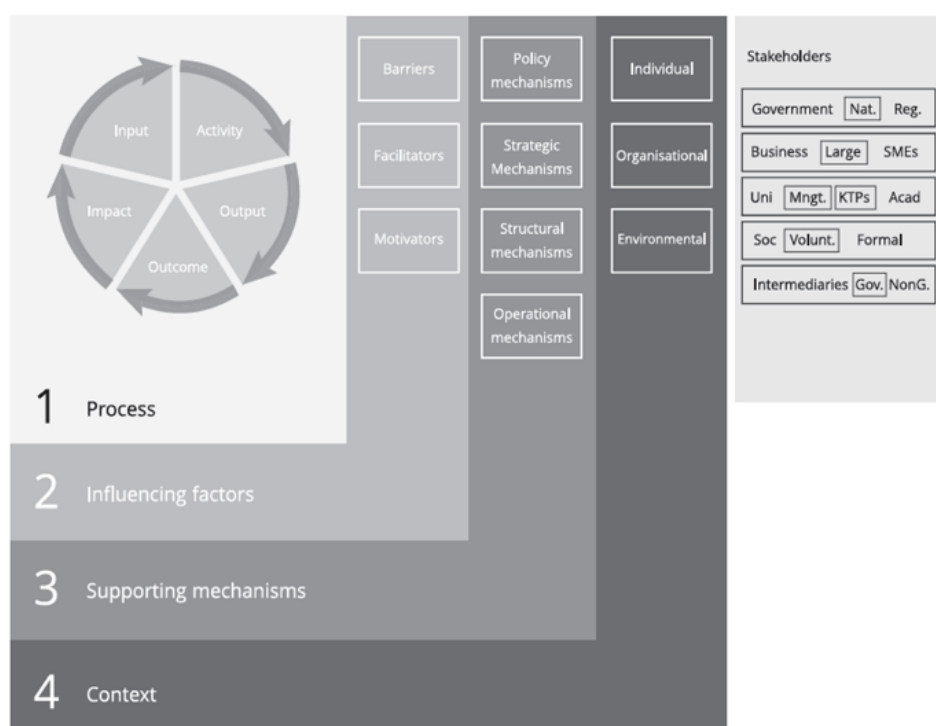
Topic - "The accompanying research in BeyondScale"

Ben Jongbloed and Andrea Kottmann explained that the accompanying research has three tasks:

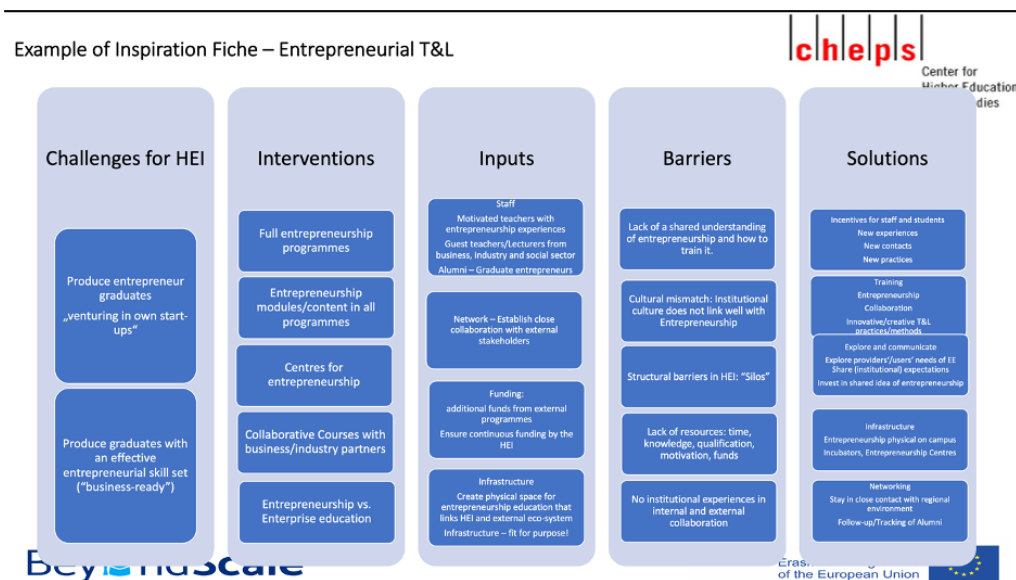
1. Support project partners in conducting their activities
2. Build a knowledge base on "How to manage the entrepreneurial transformation in higher education institutions"
3. Reflect on experiences of partners when using HEInnovate tool; Distill suggestions for enhancing use and usefulness of the tool.

Building the knowledge base entails a systematic literature review of scientific papers, studying organization change processes towards entrepreneurship, in particular entrepreneurial teaching and learning.

## Analytical Framework



As follow-on, Ben Jongbloed and Andrea Kottmann elaborated and introduced the novel concept of the **Inspiration Fiche** which stems from the process of building the knowledge base. Inspiration Fiche provides a menu of typical challenges and several HEIs responses to tackle these challenges. It will be useful for HE practitioners and managers who seek existing practices and inspiration. Inspiration fiche will be evidence-based to connect similar cases and simplify the institutional change.



Ben Jongbloed and Andrea Kottmann highlighted that the accompanying research and its constituents (literature, case studies, inspiration fiche) will enable smooth institutional transformation.

## Conclusion

Finally, the conference was summarized by Brigitte Ecker, based on the presentations and discussions she shared some key takeaways:

- Peer learning is crucial especially when disruptions happen in higher education institutions, so there is always a need to learn and empower each other;
- Foresight can be used to look into the future and grasp the innovation, in that way higher education institutions can leverage change and transformation on their terms;
- Besides strategy development techniques, there are tools like HEInnovate to support institutional development and peer-learning;
- Also, we saw the value of the projects like the "BeyondScale" and "Towards HEInnovate 2.0 from assessing to action" as they play an important role to build a community of practice and support institutional development;
- Now more than ever it is obvious that we need a strong community of higher education institutions, which connects different stakeholders and allows them to work together to share the best practices and to tackle the common challenges.

Brigitte Ecker thanked the University of Ruse for making this event possible and she expressed her gratitude to all the speakers, project partners, and attendees for their valuable contribution and presence.

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