



U2SID - University to Society Collaborations for Inclusive Digital Transformation in the Western Balkans

Showcasing the results of Digital Transformation Challenge (Delivery D3.2)

(Approved on 14th March 2025)





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This document has been produced within the framework of the Erasmus+ Capacity Building in Higher Education Project, U2SID - University to Society Collaborations for Inclusive Digital Transformation in the Western Balkans.

We extend our sincere gratitude to the project partners, whose collaboration and dedication have been instrumental in bringing this initiative to realization. The showcasing of projects on Digital Transformation Challenge (DTC) would not have been possible without the valuable input and commitment of all project partner's staff especially those from the University of Belgrade, University of Salento, NASRI, SCiDEV, CCIS, and especially the teams at four HEIs who worked on the projects: University of Shkoder, University of Korca, University of Montenegro and Mediterranean University of Albania.

We express our gratitude to the local stakeholders from public institutions, businesses, civil society and media that collaborated for the DTC and enriched the programme with their insights and contributions.

Special thanks to all the students who engaged in the programme, learning but at the same time showcasing their skills and knowledge and use them in the benefit of local communities

Through the U2SID project, the project partners have come together to position universities as key contributors to societal progress by leveraging digital innovation to address complex real-world challenges. The DTC proved to be a valuable strategic initiative, providing students and faculty with practical tools and guidance that enabled them to effectively collaborate with external stakeholders, such as businesses and civil society organizations, to develop real-world solutions with project-based learning approach.

Our gratitude also extends to the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union, whose support makes it possible for Higher Education Institutions to lead change, promote economic development, and foster inclusive societal growth. This report presents a good example on how the shared efforts can build a resilient digital future and reaffirms the role of education as a driving force for progress in the Western Balkans.





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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Digital Transformation Challenge (DTC) has been a cornerstone of the U2SID project, aimed at bridging the gap between universities and society by fostering inclusive digital transformation. Through the project-based learning approach, students from partner universities worked alongside faculty and stakeholders to develop innovative solutions addressing real-world challenges in various sectors, including education, employment, civic engagement, tourism, transport, and social responsibility.

This report presents an evaluation of the DTC, detailing its impact on digital skills development, stakeholder engagement, and sustainability, alongside an overview of the solutions showcased at the U2SID final conference in Korce.





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PROJECT SNAPSHOT

Project Title	University to society collaborations for inclusive digital transformation in the Western Balkans
Project's acronym	U2SID
Webpage	https://u2sid.al/home
Project's budget	EUR 398,650.00
Funded by	Erasmus+ Programme Capacity building in Higher Education
Project number	101083131
Project duration	24 months
Project Coordinator	University of Shkodra Luigi Gurakuqi
Countries involved	Albania; Serbia; Montenegro; Italy
Project partners	<p>University of Shkodra Luigi Gurakuqi</p> <p>University „Fan S. Noli” of Korca</p> <p>Mediterranean University of Albania</p> <p>Center Science and Innovation for Development</p> <p>Center for Comparative and International Studies</p> <p>National Agency for Scientific Research and Innovation</p> <p>University of Montenegro</p> <p>University of Belgrade</p> <p>University of Salento</p>
Aim and objective	<p>Project's aim: To foster inclusive digital transformation in the Western Balkans through increased collaboration between universities with other stakeholders such as businesses, policy makers, civil society, and media.</p> <p><i>The specific objectives of U2SID are:</i></p> <p>SO1 – To strengthen digital competences of teachers, students, and professionals through the development of a Digital Literacies Acceleration Programme as a collaborative programme among universities on one side and businesses, civil society, local decision makers and media on the other.</p>





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	<p>SO2 – To improve innovative teaching methods through piloting a Digital Transformation Challenge for students as a project-based and solution-oriented learning based on mentoring, coaching and placement at businesses, civil society, local decision makers and media.</p> <p>SO3 – To raise awareness on the importance of inclusive digitalization by including vulnerable target groups in the digitalization process.</p>
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ABBREVIATIONS

DTC – Digital Transformation Challenge

HEI – Higher Education Institution

ULGSHK – Universiteti i Shkodres “Luigj Gurakuqi” (University of Shkoder)

UNKO – Universiteti Fan S Noli Korce (University of Korce)

MUA – Mesdheu Education shpk (Mediterranean University of Albania)

SCIDEV – Qendra Shkence dhe Inovacion per Zhvillim (Center for Science and Innovation Development)

CCIS – Qendra per Studime Krahasuese dhe nderkombetare (Center for Comparative and International Studies)

NASRI – Agjencia Kombetare e Kerkimit Shkencor dhe Inovacionit (National Agency for Scientific Research and Innovation)

UOM – Javna Ustanova Univerzitet Crne Gore (University of Montenegro)

UniBelgrade – Univerzitet u Beogradu (University of Belgrade)

UNILE – Universita del Salento (University of Salento)

Animals Need Me (NGO) - ANM





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1. INTRODUCTION

The DTC, a key initiative within the Erasmus+ U2SID project, was designed to foster inclusive digitalization by empowering students, faculty, and external stakeholders to collaboratively develop real-world digital solutions. Through a project-based learning approach, the DTC aimed to enhance digital competences, bridge academia with industry, and address societal challenges across partner universities in Albania and Montenegro. After approving the manual and discussed on the path through DTC in the meeting in Montenegro (<https://u2sid.al/news/advancing-digital-transformation-in-higher-education>), the HEIs involved went through their experiences on the digital challenges.

The initiative provided students with an opportunity to apply digital tools and methodologies to challenges in education, employment, entrepreneurship, civic engagement, tourism, transport, and social responsibility at local level. By integrating theoretical knowledge with hands-on problem-solving, DTC encouraged participants to develop innovative solution that could be implemented beyond university settings.

The final conference, held at UNKO in Korce, Albania on 27-28 February 2025, served as the culmination of these efforts, showcasing the outcomes of student-led projects developed throughout the U2SID project. This event brought together academics, students, industry experts, policymakers, and civil society representatives, reinforcing the importance of university-society collaboration in advancing digital transformation in the Western Balkans. Participation at this event is as follows:

Category	27 th February 2025		28 th February 2025	
Academics	17		20	
Students	23		35	
Civil society	9		6	
Public organizations	10		2	
Total	59	<i>21 males</i>	63	<i>21 males</i>
		<i>38 females</i>		

This report represents:

- ✓ The path through DTC, including its impact, challenges and recommendations for future digital learning initiatives.
- ✓ A showcasing of digital solutions, highlighting how student projects address sector-specific challenges through technology-driven innovations.





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- ✓ Insights into the sustainability of DTC model, with strategies for integrating project-based learning into higher education curricula.

By fostering digital literacy, innovation, and collaboration with local stakeholders, DTC has demonstrated the potential of universities to act as catalysts for digital change, equipping students with the skills needed for the evolving digital economy with an inclusive approach.

2. THE PATH THROUGH DTC

Each of HEI involved in project-based learning experience (ULGSHK, UNKO, UOM and MUA) realized calls for participation for stakeholders, students and academics. The calls were published on their respective websites and the U2SID website, and on social media of the U2SID and their respective institutions. After going through gathering applications, selection and creating teams, they went through DTC workshops offering insights into their objectives, structure, key activities, and expected outcomes. Each of the four partner universities organized its DTC meetings, tailoring them to meet the specific needs of their academic communities, industries, and regional contexts. The collective aim was to strengthen digital competencies and drive innovation through collaboration. All the teams got professional continuous support by the other partners of the consortium.

2.1 Objective and Goals of the DTC meetings

The core objective of the DTC meetings was to discuss with participants the necessary digital skills and knowledge to navigate the ever-evolving digital landscape in education and professional fields. The specific goals of the meetings were to:

- Discuss with stakeholders about their real-world issues that could have a digital solution
- Involve academics in a project-based learning experience as a good tool to increase the impact of their teaching experience with the aim to involve this practice in their teaching classes
- Integrate students in a collaboration project between academia and stakeholders in order for them to implement their knowledge, enhance their curriculum vitae and create connections in the job market as a possibility for their future employment.

2.2 Target Audience

The DTC meetings were designed to engage a broad range of participants, each with distinct needs in the digital transformation process:

University Students

Particularly those from technology, business, and social sciences disciplines, aiming to develop digital competencies to enhance their career prospects.





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Faculty Members

Academics seeking to integrate digital tools and project-based learning experience into their teaching practices and enhance their own digital literacy.

External Stakeholders

Representatives from businesses, government, and non-governmental organizations engaged in or supporting digital transformation efforts.

Technology Experts

Specialists who provided insights on emerging digital tools and trends, adding value to the content and practical applications.

3. DETAILED OVERVIEW OF MEETINGS BY UNIVERSITY

This report provides a detailed analysis of the DTC meetings organized by each of the four universities involved in the U2SID project. The work is realized following the Manual for DTC, a previous delivery on U2SID. Each of the HEIs adopted the manual as by their specific needs.

The following analysis covers key details such as specifics on cases, meetings dates, agendas, participant demographics, themes covered, stakeholder involvement, and any challenges faced during the execution of each workshop. Each university's efforts in organizing the meetings are presented individually to highlight their unique contributions while also identifying common trends and practices across the universities.

3.1 University of Shkodra 'Luigj Gurakuqi' (ULGSHK)

The ULGSHK in November 2024 opened the call for participation for stakeholders, students and academics as by following links on ULGSHK website. The calls were promoted also on social media channels of U2SID and ULGSHK

<https://unishk.edu.al/njoftime/njoftimi-i-plote/thirrje-stakeholders>

<https://unishk.edu.al/njoftime/njoftimi-i-plote/thirrje-per-lektore-u2sid>

<https://unishk.edu.al/njoftime/njoftimi-i-plote/thirrje-per-studentet-u2sid>

There were answered to the call for stakeholders:

- Rozafa Kaci shpk, a local meat processing company based in Shkoder, and delivers its products in 17 cities all around Albania. Their need was to find an economic digital solution for traceability of raw materials to the final delivered products. (*Case 1*) Contact point here is Nikolin Kaci (M) (finance





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manager at the company)

- Animals Need Me (ANM) – an NGO located in Shkoder, Albania, established in 2012 working on rescuing, rehabilitating and rehoming stray animals (dog and cats). They are doing an exceptional job in the city during these more than 12 years and have collaboration with other organization in and out Albania. Their need was an economic digital solution for a shelter management system. (Case 2) Contact point here are Oli Pero (F) (manager at ANM) and Elda Ahmetaj (F) (employee).

Both stakeholders were searching economic digital solutions as they were aware that there were digital solutions out there, but they were costly and not affordable for each of them. Their request was also to find a user-friendly solution.

To the call for academics there were answered 12 academics, all women (F). It was decided that 5 of them were going to work directly with the students, where the others would have supportive roles. So, the following academics were involved directly in the 2 cases:

- Case 1 - Erjola Barbullushi, Ermira Kalaj, Arjeta Anamali
- Case 2 – Nertila Ljarja, Romina Dhora

To the call for students were answered 8 students, from business administration, finance and informatics study programs (2 M; 6 F). They were organized as follows:

- Case 1 – Gentiana Prendi (finance), Klea Qallija (business-administration), Arbi Gjylbegaj (informatics), Orkid Barbullushi (informatics)
- Case 2 – Loren Gjonaj (business-administration), Aurela Mandi (finance), Alesia Celaj (informatics), Fatjona Alija (Informatics)

For having a supportive IT role in order to guarantee the proper direction towards the digital solution, there were involved two IT specialist from the IT staff of ULGSHK and respectively Noel Radovani (M) for Case 1 and Elton Shpuza (M) for Case 2.

The following detailed summary provides a comprehensive overview of the meetings held at the ULGSHK under the U2SID project. The meetings cover a range of topics related to digital transformation in SMEs, stakeholder engagement, and digital solutions for NGOs, with a focus on practical applications and real-world challenges. The two teams worked independently by each other, but they also discussed among them issues encountered, difficulties and possible solutions. There were opened two WhatsApp groups for having fast and direct communication. The meetings were organized in place at the Economic Faculty building of ULGSHK at the laboratory previously realized on USIA, an Erasmus + CBHE project which proceeded U2SID.

The work on progress was promoted through the social media channels of U2SID and ULGSHK.

Description of the work performed

Meetings Breakdown (details on the meetings are uploaded on our shared Google Drive on





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<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1EWOoPHejaHvWLqgNe1bYcp319gjUKtJ>):

- Meeting 1: 29 October 2024 – 3 participants
- Meeting 2: 20 November 2024 – 6 participants
- Meeting 3: 21 November 2024 – 5 participants
- Meeting 4: 04 December 2024 – 4 participants
- Meeting 5: 10 December 2024 – 11 participants (working group members and applicants)
- Meeting 6: 16 January 2025 – 9 participants (working group members)
- Meeting 7: 20 February 2025 - 10 participants (working group and applicants)

The meetings attracted a diverse mix of participants, including students, faculty members, and external stakeholders, such as industry partners, government representatives, and NGO representatives. The total number of participants ranged from 3 to 11, with a gradual increase in participation over the course of the meetings. There were also informal meetings or communication with the stakeholders in case of discussion of details of their issues or the found solutions.

Challenges and Outcomes

Challenges faced included understanding NGO requirements and managing diverse stakeholder needs. Despite these challenges, the meetings resulted in valuable outcomes, such as the formation of subgroups for WP3, collaboration agreements with the NGO and the business, and an increased focus on region-specific digital transformation strategies.

- Key outcomes included:
 - Clear structure for WP3 and agreed deadlines.
 - Agreement on digital solutions for the NGO and business.
 - Increased engagement from local stakeholders.
 - Formation of new academic collaborations for digital transformation research.
 - Improved understanding of digital tools for SMEs and increased engagement in digital transformation efforts.

This series of meetings successfully advanced the goals of the U2SID project by fostering collaboration, addressing specific needs, and providing practical solutions for digital transformation in various sectors.

3.2 University of Korça (UNKO)

The UNKO found another approach they considered the proper one in their conditions. After opening the call for stakeholders (on <https://unkorce.edu.al/universiteti-fan-s-noli-fton-pale-interesi-per-shprehjen-e-projektpropozimeve-projekti-u2sid-erasmus-cbhe/>) it organized a roundtable with its





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stakeholders with the goal to engage them in identifying the needs, challenges, and opportunities in digital transformation and foster collaboration between the university and regional actors. The project emphasizes the inclusion of digital tools, platforms, and services to benefit academic and non-academic contexts. The meeting was organized for 13 November 2024. There were in total 24 participants (8 M and 16 F). After the meeting, having the specifics needs of the stakeholders, UNKO opened calls for students and academics. They reached the decision to have just one team, focusing their efforts in just one specific case, specifically on *CitySphere App – Your city in the palm of your hands*, a cutting-edge mobile application designed to connect individuals with the city to essential updates, opportunities and events in real time, considering it as a central digital hub.

In the working team there were involved 6M and 5 F, detailed as follows:

- *Academics*: Benita Stavre, Lediana Alolli, Romeo Terolli and Dorela Kacuni
- *Students*: Ina Bala, Fjorela Bajraktari, Elvi Kuci, Kledis Kapri, Luis Cota, Dhimiter Lubonja and Kristi Kapri

There reporting for the work realized with the related documents can be found on the shared Google Drive on

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/17PialCcmnSEOZjkEC8R_8bpQwZe3TrWH?usp=drive_link .

During the time the team worked on the project there were posts realized on social media channels of the UNKO and U2SID.

Description of Work Performed:

The discussion revolved around the Digital Acceleration Programme tailored for UNKO's academic and non-academic ecosystem. The program aims to strengthen the university's ties with stakeholders and enhance its role in addressing regional challenges through innovative digital solutions.

Event Description:

A roundtable discussion took place at the Faculty of Economics, gathering stakeholders from local government, institutions, startups, students, and academic staff. Key topics included:

- The development of digital services the university can offer to regional stakeholders.
- Direct engagement of students and staff in addressing regional challenges.
- Proposals for innovative ideas to be explored through a university call, supported by European partners in the project.

Challenges and outcomes

Partners Involved :





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- Municipality of Korça.
- Korça Innovation Hub.
- “Nje ose Zero” Start-Up Company.
- UNKO Alumni and Career Center.

(Details on the names of attendees in the meeting can be found on the shared Google Drive folder)

The follow up was the team creation with students and academics, who organized several meetings with the aim to

- ✓ Discuss the issue presented by the stakeholders
- ✓ Brainstorm ideas going through this issue
- ✓ Discussing the need to solve the issue and opportunities it could generate for a broader target
- ✓ Working on and coming up with the solution

There was a bit of a challenge to find one fit all solution, in order to integrate in one application all the information appropriate for the needs of the stakeholders. The team work hard to design the solution, but aware that there are needed more specific technical knowledge and something to continuously work on.

3.3 University of Montenegro (UOM)

UOM also went through the call for participation for stakeholders, students and academics. The call was published on the website of UOM ([UOM Open call](#)), and on social media of UOM and U2SID. The reporting for UOM with the related documents can be found on the shared Google Drive on

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/12P6DYMxQIPz3SBhQIHkVMfPsRFYmIcw6?usp=drive_link . There were organized 2 teams and the people involved were:

- *Academics* 6/ Male 3, Female 3 - Goran Ćeranić, Sandra Vukasojević, Predrag Živković, Marijana Cerović, Šarović Rade, Nataša Krivokapić
- *Students* 33/ Male 7 Female 26 - Sanja Dubljević, Vasko Krrgović, Jovana Đurović, Dragana Mihailović, Anđela Fatić, Mujević Ernesa, Dubljević Tijana, Višnjjić Vesna, Hasanović Senida, Selma Pjevović, Ajla Luković, Anastasija Bokun, Nađa Tajić, Tijana Dragojević, Milena Bulatović, Damjan Vujičić, Đorđije Perović, Iva Komatina, Clement Kawiecki, Đorđije Avramović, Miljana Kilibarda, Jovo Radović, Kristina Petrović, Martina Mirdita, Nina Simonović, Aleksandra Milikić, Nisera Hasović, Radojica Tešović, Ines Božović, Kristina Marojević, Anja Kovačević, Katarina Baošić, Dragana Nikčević

Some details of the process of the digital challenge the UOM went through can be found in the following.

[Description of the work performed](#)

The dates for the official meetings are:

- Meeting 1: November 27, 2024- 2 stakeholders, 4 lecturers, 12 students
- Meeting 2: December 9, 2024 - 11 lecturers

These meetings were followed by the others as below





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- 18. December, Faculty of Philosophy Niksic, 19 participants
- 19. December, Faculty of Philosophy Niksic, 23 participants
- 23. December, Faculty of Philosophy Niksic, 15 participants
- 26. December, Faculty of Philosophy Niksic, 21 participants
- 14. January, Online meeting, 13 participants
- 15. January, Online meeting, 11 participants

Public Presentation of Stakeholder Challenges

The meeting opened with two external stakeholders presenting their unique challenges, each reflecting real-world issues faced by communities in Montenegro. This segment allowed the university community to understand the practical problems that needed innovative solutions, particularly in the digital transformation context.

- Svetozar Bajović, the Head of the Culture Sector from the Municipality of Nikšić, presented a challenge focused on youth engagement in cultural events. His concern was the decreasing participation of young people in cultural and sporting activities and the difficulty of reaching them through traditional channels. The discussion sought solutions using digital communication tools and engagement strategies.
- Kerim Međedović, the Director of the NGO Agency for Local Democracy, addressed a challenge related to youth participation in entrepreneurship. Specifically, the challenge was about how to stimulate young entrepreneurs and youth workers to get involved in the Living Lab initiatives, a platform designed for social and technological innovation.

Discussion and Q&A Session:

Following the presentations, the meetings moved into an interactive Q&A session, where lecturers, students, and stakeholders engaged in in-depth discussions. The dialogue allowed participants to probe further into the challenges, ask questions, and offer initial thoughts on potential solutions. Stakeholders shared their experiences, while the audience brainstormed ideas on how digital tools could help resolve the presented challenges.

Formation of Multidisciplinary Teams:

After the discussions, participants were invited to collaborate and create multidisciplinary teams. These teams were composed of lecturers, students, and other interested parties, ensuring diverse perspectives on the problem-solving process. The goal was to leverage expertise from different fields to generate innovative solutions.

- Teams were specifically designed to ensure a multidisciplinary approach, combining different areas of expertise (cultural engagement, entrepreneurship, digital communication) to address the challenges more holistically.





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Challenges and outcomes

Once the teams were formed, each group began developing action plans. These plans outlined how they would approach their assigned challenges and identified key tasks, roles, and responsibilities for each team member. The teams were given the tools to brainstorm, research, and develop strategies that could be practically implemented in the future.

The planning process also involved coordination of schedules and aligning the diverse interests and skills of team members. Ensuring a productive collaborative environment was key to the success of this phase. There was realized a summary of key points discussed, emphasizing the importance of addressing local societal challenges through innovative digital solutions. Follow-up actions were established, with each team assigned tasks to continue their work and refine their action plans. A follow-up meeting was scheduled to review progress and further develop the ideas that emerged.

Themes Covered

a) Cultural Engagement

Youth participation in cultural and sports events was explored. Digital communication tools like social media, apps, and websites were suggested to help engage youth and provide them with real-time information about events.

b) Youth Participation in Entrepreneurship

The importance of involving youth in entrepreneurship was emphasized, especially through initiatives like Living Labs, where young people can collaborate on solving real-world problems. Strategies to digitalize entrepreneurship and support young innovators were discussed.

c) Digital Communication Strategies

Methods to improve digital outreach to young people were a key focus. This included the use of platforms, such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok, to spread awareness of events and initiatives targeting youth.

d) Collaborative Problem Solving

Emphasis was placed on to problem-solving. Lecturers, students, and stakeholders worked together in multidisciplinary groups to solve challenges, showcasing the power of collaboration in addressing complex societal issues.

Challenges Faced:

1. Stakeholder Engagement:





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Some stakeholders found it challenging to commit time and resources due to competing priorities and schedules. The University worked closely with stakeholders to accommodate their needs and encourage participation.

2. Multidisciplinary Coordination:

Aligning the schedules and interests of diverse participants — lecturers, students, and stakeholders—was a challenge, as each group had different time constraints and priorities. However, effective communication and planning helped overcome these hurdles.

Outcomes:

1. Teams were successfully established, consisting of lecturers, students, and stakeholders, with clear roles and responsibilities for addressing the challenges.
2. The event successfully raised awareness about how digital tools can be leveraged to address local community challenges, particularly in the areas of cultural engagement and entrepreneurship.
3. Each team developed detailed action plans to address the challenges. These plans included strategies for improving digital communication, increasing youth participation, and supporting young entrepreneurs.

This meetings series at the UOM fostered collaboration between lecturers, students, and external stakeholders, with the aim of solving local societal challenges through the use of digital transformation tools and innovative solutions. The meetings successfully engaged participants, generated actionable plans, and facilitated the formation of multidisciplinary teams to tackle challenges in the areas of youth engagement, cultural participation, and entrepreneurship.

3.4 Mediterranean University of Albania (MUA)

After the meeting in Montenegro discussing the DTC Manual and the process to implement it, MUA went through the call for participation for stakeholders, academics and students. The call was published on MUA website ([MUA call for participation](#)) and also social media channels of MUA and U2SID.

MUA hosted a series of events as part of the DTC under the U2SID project. The main aim of the DTC was to foster collaboration between society, businesses, and MUA's expert faculty and students to co-create innovative digital solutions for key business challenges. These solutions were intended to address economic, social, and environmental concerns by utilizing the latest digital tools and methodologies. The events were designed to ensure that the digital transformation process aligned with the real needs and challenges faced by businesses, while also providing a platform for students and lecturers to contribute to these solutions. The reporting for the meetings and related documents can be found on our shared Google Drive on

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1NS_fLAgr3f7NIWQy9TQ2YdzdzLFLExe?usp=drive_link .





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Description of the work performed

There were organized two teams that worked on the projects

- *Team 1* - Digital solutions in intercity and international transportation: Challenges and solutions
- *Team 2* – Digital transformation in Albania’s tourism sector: Challenges, opportunities and strategic solutions

The involvement of people in the respective teams (4 F, 6 M) is as below:

- *Team 1* - Academics (Holta Heba, Ajkuna Mujo) and students (Klea Babaj, Mateo Zeneli and Esma Cami)
- *Team 2* – Academics (Elion Shabanaj, Jurgen Mecaj) and students (Iraklis Semanjaku, Mario Marku and Denis Shabanaj)

Some details of the way MUA went through DTC can be found in the following.

Challenges and outcomes

Meeting with Stakeholders

Objective: The aim of this meeting was to engage key stakeholders from Albania’s tourism and transport sectors to discuss their digital transformation goals, needs, and challenges.

Key Discussions:

- **Tourism Industry Challenges:**
 - Ms. Armelina Lila from Globus Travel discussed the need for a digital platform to enhance operational efficiency, improve real-time booking systems, marketing tools, and promote collaboration among stakeholders.
- **Transport Industry Challenges:**
 - Mr. Ferjolt Ozuni from Magus Group Albania emphasized the lack of digitalization in Albania’s public transport sector. He advocated for a centralized platform that would provide real-time travel information, allow for online bookings, and enable more efficient fleet management.

Outcome:

- The meeting identified the digital gaps faced by these industries, offering valuable insights that will guide MUA’s faculty and students in the development of digital solutions targeted at these issues.

Meeting with Lecturers and Students

Objective: This event aimed to share the outcomes of the stakeholders’ meeting with MUA’s lecturers and students and to encourage their participation in the Digital Transformation Challenge (DTC).





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Key Activities:

- Presentation by Project Manager:
 - Updates on the U2SID project were presented, its progress, and objectives.
- Discussion of Challenges:
 - MUA's lecturers and students were briefed on the specific challenges identified by stakeholders in the tourism and public transport sectors.
- Formation of Working Groups:
 - Two working groups were created, consisting of both lecturers and students, tasked with developing digital solutions to address the identified challenges.

Outcome:

- The event enabled MUA's academic community to actively participate in tackling real- world problems. It fostered collaboration and innovation, ensuring that the solutions developed were aligned with the actual needs of the industries.





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4. SHOWCASING OF DIGITAL SOLUTIONS

The teams from each HEI took part in the U2SID final conference in Korca, which provided a platform for the teams to present their DTC-developed solutions, demonstrating their potential to address societal needs through digital transformation.

4.1 University of Shkoder: Enhancing food safety and animal welfare through digitalization

Project 1: Digital Traceability system for food supply chains

[ULGSHK Team1](#)

Challenge: Ensuring food supply chain transparency and compliance with EU regulations.

Solutions: An Excel solution working on Work Books (short term, easy to work on, minimal digital skills for implementation, low training costs associated with the implementation, and low cost)

A QR code-based tracking system ensuring food safety compliance and transparency (long term solution, needs time to be implemented, associated with higher costs than the first solution)

Impact: Supports quality control, improves customer trust, and enhances supply chain efficiency

Project 2: Digital shelter management system for “Animals Need Me”

[ULGSHK Team2](#)

Challenge: Lack of digital records for rescued animals in local shelters.

Solutions: An Excel solution working on Work Books (short term, easy to work on, minimal digital skills for implementation, low training costs associated with the implementation, and low cost- the NGO is vulnerable to costs as it works on volunteers bases and on donations)

A database for rescued animals, facilitating adoption tracking, medical care, and shelter solutions (the system is already designed and presented to the NGO, but it needs more time to finish). Work done, it will be the first shelter management system in its kind in Albania.

Impact: Enhances efficiency in animal welfare organizations, promoting structured care and adoption processes.

4.2 University of Korca: CitySphere – A digital hub for students, alumni, and employers

[UNKO Team](#)

As it was a project that took a lot of effort, the University of Korca came up with one project.

Challenge: lack of centralized digital platform for job seekers, students, and local businesses





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Solution: The CitySphere app offers real-time job postings, academic event updates and networking opportunities

Impact: Strengthens university-business collaboration, enhances student employability, and facilitates alumni engagement.

4.3 University of Montenegro: Digital engagement in cultural and entrepreneurial sectors

Project 1: Living lab stakeholder engagement model

[UOM Team1](#)

Challenge: Identifying and engaging young entrepreneurs and rural stakeholders.

Solution: A stakeholder mapping system combined with digital outreach strategies

Impact: Increases participation in entrepreneurial programs, fostering rural innovation

Project 2: CooltuNIK – Digital platform for cultural engagement

[UOM Team2](#)

Challenge: Limited youth participation in cultural and sports events due to lack of information

Solution: A mobile-friendly digital platform for event promotion and interactive engagement.

Impact: Increases cultural awareness, boosts event attendance, and strengthens youth inclusion.

4.4 Mediterranean University of Albania: Digital transformation in tourism and transport

Project 1: Digital transformation in Albania's tourism sector

[MUA Team1](#)

Challenge: The tourism sector's lack of digital integration, even being an important sector for the economy.

Solution: A strategic framework for digital marketing, AI-driven recommendations, and mobile booking solutions.

Impact: Enhances competitiveness and sustainability in the tourism industry.

Project 2: Smart transport solutions for Albania

[MUA Team2](#)

Challenge: Inefficiencies in public transport due to manual processes





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Solution: A centralized digital platform for real time updates, e-ticketing, and AI-driven route optimization

Impact: Improves efficiency, accessibility, and sustainability in the transport sector.

5. QUALITY ASSURANCE

Work Package 3 went through 2 (two) quality evaluations: the first after the workshop in Montenegro and the other after the final event in Korca. The reports can be found on our shared Google Drive on https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1-r0qFQU6rPdt5rY_JI299iIRbwLlzwwY?usp=drive_link

The evaluation of the **U2SID workshop in Montenegro** demonstrated a highly successful event that was positively received by participants. Feedback highlighted that the workshop effectively addressed participants' professional needs and aligned well with the U2SID project objectives, particularly in increasing understanding and supporting the integration of the Digital Transformation Challenge (DTC) within institutions.

The workshop's organization, clarity of presentation, and comprehensive coverage of topics were standout strengths, as indicated by the high ratings for clarity, relevance, and alignment with objectives. Furthermore, the event fostered valuable discussion and knowledge-sharing among attendees, facilitating a dynamic learning environment that was widely appreciated.

Therefore the workshop succeeded in delivering meaningful, relevant content in an engaging and accessible format. The positive feedback validates its effectiveness and provides a strong foundation for planning future workshops with similarly high standards.

Relating to the final event in Korca, the evaluation of the digital transformation conference shows it was a successful event, with positive feedback highlighting its relevance, effective organization, and engaging content. Participants appreciated the clear communication of objectives, the strong collaboration between diverse stakeholders, and the focus on inclusive digital transformation. The Student Project Showcasing was particularly valued for its innovative solutions, with many praising the quality of presentations and the real-world applications of the projects. Additionally, the opportunities for discussion and networking were deemed excellent, fostering an interactive and dynamic learning environment. The most evaluated theme from the agenda was the students project showcasing, where students from different HEIs and countries had a great opportunity to interact with each other and discuss on each other's experience and solutions. The event was a great possibility for them for networking too and they very much appreciated the certificates delivered to them for their engagement in the project. The certificates can be found on [U2SID students certificates](#).

6. CONCLUSION

The Digital Transformation Challenge (DTC) under the U2SID project has been a transformative experience, demonstrating the power of project-based learning in equipping students with digital skills, fostering university-society collaboration, and generating innovative solutions to real-world challenges. The challenge successfully brought together students, faculty, and external stakeholders across Albania, Montenegro, and Italy, reinforcing the role of higher education institutions (HEIs) as drivers of digital transformation.



A key achievement of the DTC was its structured approach, which followed a consistent path across all participating HEIs:

1. Stakeholder Engagement – Universities organized calls for participation, bringing together students, faculty, businesses, and civil society organizations to identify real-world challenges that could be addressed through digital solutions.
2. Team Formation & Capacity Building – Selected participants took part in DTC workshops, where they received guidance on problem analysis, digital solution development, and project implementation.
3. Project Development & Implementation – Multidisciplinary teams worked on designing, prototyping, and testing digital solutions, incorporating stakeholder feedback and academic expertise.
4. Showcasing & Future Scalability – The final phase of the challenge culminated in the U2SID Final Conference in Korçë, where student teams presented their solutions and discussed their impact with experts from academia, industry, and policymaking.

The projects developed by each university showcased the diversity of challenges tackled through digital innovation:

- University of Shkodër (UNISHK) focused on food safety and animal welfare, demonstrating how digital tools can enhance traceability in food production and streamline shelter management systems for rescued animals.
- University of Korçë (UNIKO) developed CitySphere, a comprehensive digital hub for students, alumni, and employers, facilitating networking, career development, and academic engagement.
- University of Montenegro (UOM) emphasized youth participation in entrepreneurship and culture, with solutions aimed at mapping stakeholders in rural innovation and enhancing cultural engagement through digital platforms.
- Mediterranean University of Albania (MUA) addressed tourism and transport challenges, designing smart digital solutions that enhance user experience, streamline operations, and contribute to Albania's economic growth.

6.1 Key Lessons Learned & Impact

- ✓ Empowering Students through Digital Competencies – The challenge provided students with practical, hands-on experience in applying digital tools and methodologies to solve complex problems, bridging the gap between academic knowledge and industry needs.
- ✓ Strengthening University-Society Collaboration – By directly engaging external stakeholders, the DTC reinforced the importance of co-creation, where businesses, policymakers, and NGOs play an active role in shaping digital education and solutions.
- ✓ Sustainability & Scalability – Several projects, such as CitySphere and the Digital Traceability System, have potential for further development and long-term adoption. Universities are encouraged to integrate DTC methodologies into curricula, ensuring continued impact.