

ACTIVITY REPORT 2023

– Helixconnect Europe –



helixconnect

FOREWORD



Dear network and stakeholders,

It is with great pleasure that we share with you the highlights and achievements of HELIXCONNECT EUROPE for the year of 2023. This year has been particularly fruitful, as we have successfully engaged in a multitude of impactful projects addressing key development challenges in Eastern Europe and Western Balkans.

Our proven impact has advanced our understanding of the regional needs and reinforced our role as a trusted partner of regional growth. We are proud of the vibrant community that we managed to build with our partners and stakeholders in our region.

2023 in a snapshot:

- 16 ongoing projects worth more than 6.3 mil EUR for the entire network
- 30+ new talents financially supported and retained (employed) in the region via our partner network
- 800+ upskilled and certified talents in a diverse set of fields
- 5 new public-private partnership agreements to support smart specialisation implementation as well as inclusive urban designs in various regions
- Opened and launched our office in Belgrade, Serbia
- Joined the EIT Deep Tech Talent Initiative and pledged 2000+ trained talents in deep tech until 2025.
- Organized and demonstrated our tools/products in more than 25 events with audiences surpassing 5000 participants.

This report stands as a testament to the hard work and collaborative spirit of our staff, partners, and stakeholders. Our gratitude goes to all those that have made our joint achievements possible.

Looking ahead, together with our stakeholder group, we look forward to further expanding our impact in Eastern Europe and Western Balkans.

Sincerely,

Dr Adrian Solomon
Director, HELIXCONNECT EUROPE

1. MISSION OF HELIXCONNECT EUROPE

HELIXCONNECT EUROPE (HELIXCONNECT) emerged as a need for a better hands-on approach to facilitating innovation, helping organisations grow and enabling a proper integration among innovators, NGOs, industry, and government. Our vision is to bridge global innovation systems and enable global knowledge and technology transfer in Eastern Europe and Western Balkans. With the up rise of modern technologies and organisational performance frameworks, massive shifts and business model innovations are required in order to transform organisations to stay competitive while ensuring that they reach their intended impact in a fair and responsible manner. Currently, HELIXCONNECT has 9 experienced staff members (4 advanced career researchers with PhD, 2 Early career researchers, 2 software developers, 1 admin) and casually, works with a range of 15-20 international experts. Helixconnect has offices both in Romania and in Serbia covering 5 main departments:

- Ecosystem Integration Lab (start-up & scale-up acceleration platform and support for social entrepreneurs delivered via universities)
- Triple Helix Romania (knowledge and technology transfer via a triple/quadruple helix approach to foster enterprising)
- Center for Digital Transformation (toolkits for digital transformation of higher education and entrepreneurs)
- Balkan Science Tellers (toolkits for citizen science and science communication)
- Bauhaus & Inclusive Cities (toolkits for participatory engagement in sustainable and inclusive urban development)

2. ONGOING PROJECTS



superYOUTH – Spot-on youth for a democratic, informed and more crisis-responsive EU society – Erasmus+ Cooperation partnership (YOU), 2022 – 2023. <https://superyouth.eu>

This project aims to develop a transnational youth worker training programme on better training youth to debunk Disinformation, Misinformation, and Malinformation (DMM).



BETTER Life – Bringing Excellence to Transformative Engaged Research in Life Sciences through Integrated Digital Centres – Horizon Europe, 2022 – 2025. <https://betterlifehorizon.eu>

The general objective of this project is to establish the EU Digital Centre of Excellence for Socially Engaged Research in Life Sciences. The Centre will be an inter-institutional support structure for developing capacities of early career researchers aiming to foster socially engaged research to tackle societal challenges in their surrounding ecosystems.



DICE – Digital Community Engagement Accelerator for student learning and socio-economic impact – Erasmus+ Cooperation partnership (HED), 2022 – 2025. <https://www.diceaccelerator.eu/about/>

The project addresses digital transformation and supports the digital capabilities of the higher education sectors. Specifically, the framework and the Manual for Digital Community Engagement Courses will allow university educators and course directors of any discipline to design their own digital community engagement courses, bringing to the forefront new digital methods and formats.

ENTRENEET – Digital and sustainable enterprising skills for NEETs from marginalized communities – Erasmus+ Small scale partnership (YOU), 2023 – 2024. <http://entreneet.eu>

This project aims to provide EU's NEETs with the right skills to succeed in nowadays business environment while providing them with better chances of acquiring (impact) investment and public support for their digital, sustainable & responsible business ideas.



ENTREYOUTH – An Entrepreneurial Youth Worker Training Programme on Sustainable & Circular Urban Food Enterprising, Erasmus+ Cooperation partnership (YOU), 2021 – 2023. <https://entreyouthproject.eu>

This project aims to develop a transnational non-formal education entrepreneurial youth worker training programme targeting youth and youth workers, with the goal of promoting active citizenship, young people's sense of initiative and youth entrepreneurship including social entrepreneurship.



MAAT – Mobilizing youth for gender inclusive cities – Erasmus+ Cooperation partnership (YOU), 2022 – 2024. <https://maatproject.eu>

This project aims at contributing to the mobilization of youth to act on making their cities Intersectional Gender Inclusive Cities. It is expected that through the complementary project results and activities, youth will be engaged in becoming agents of change in making their cities more inclusive and welcoming to everyone.



HERSTORY – Embracing Gender Oriented Approach for Entrepreneurial Growth through the Lens of Intersectionality and Applauding the Virtues of Mistakeful Learning – Erasmus+ Cooperation partnership (YOU), 2022 – 2024. <https://entrepreneurialherstory.eu>

This project aims to enhance the entrepreneurial mindset among young entrepreneurs. It focuses on identifying role models away from toxic gendered stereotypes and values. This will be achieved by giving minorities and underrepresented communities a voice to express their stories and unfold their memoirs in terms of unconventional entrepreneurship. The project's objectives will be met by capacity building of the partner organisations, associated partners, and stakeholders.



SHIFT – ESG Impact Index in Higher Education – Erasmus+ Cooperation partnership (HED), 2023 – 2026. <http://shift-esg.eu>

This project aims at increasing the capacity of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to contribute to SDGs by assessing and implementing ESG strategies and policies through the ESG Impact Index platform, it will equip Higher Education institutions' students, academics, researchers and staff with the necessary skills and knowledge to implement and monitor ESG practices and reinforcing transnational cooperation by facilitating the sharing of best practices and knowledge among HEIs.



PREMETS – Predictive Maintenance Education & Training System: An alliance for boosting the European Innovation in Predictive Maintenance through entrepreneurial cooperation, education, and training – Alliances for Education and Enterprises, 2023 – 2026. <https://premets.eu>

This project aims to introduce an alliance for boosting the European Innovation in Predictive Maintenance through entrepreneurial cooperation, education, and training for the development of a coherent digital platform that covers all aspects of the PM process.



GREENBIM - Transnational MSc in BIM and Energy Efficiency in Buildings – Erasmus+ Cooperation partnership (HED), 2022 – 2025.

This project aims to tackle the lack of know-how and engineering skills on Building Information Management in EU and Turkey for achieving energy efficiency in buildings. Through the activities of the project, GREENBIM aims to contribute to the efforts of EU in transforming the current building stock into an energy efficient, environmentally friendly, and sustainable one.



DIEM – Distributed Ledger Technology: Innovation & Ecosystem Management) – Horizon Europe, 2022 – 2026. <https://diem-dn.eu>

DIEM brings together academic, government and industry expertise to holistically investigate the managerial, economic, and societal implications of DLT. To achieve its goals, DIEM sets out to facilitate an international network of interdisciplinary scholars, organizations, and institutions across sectors to support cutting edge innovation in DLT.



CISCOFY – A Connective, Inclusive and Smart digital Competence-building Framework – Erasmus+ Cooperation partnership (HED), 2022 – 2023. <https://ciscofy.eu>

This project aims to boost the digital readiness, resilience, and competences of university lecturers (primary and adult/youth trainers secondary) towards upscaling online education on three main pillars:

digital transformation through the development of digital readiness, resilience and capacity, building skills to foster inclusion and representation in digital education and promote and rewarding excellence in teaching and skills development.

MOOW CODE – Massive Open Online Week for Collaborative Digital Education – Erasmus+ Cooperation partnership (HED), 2022 – 2024.

 <https://www.moowcode.eu>

This project aims to develop and promote MOOW (Massive Open Online Week), a multifaceted, synergistic format of digital learning and co-creation in higher education. The ambition of the project is to kick-start a strong MOOW movement across Europe by providing all required methods and instruments for MOOW planning, organisation, and implementation.



CHARLIE – Challenging Bias in Big Data user for AI and Machine Learning – Erasmus+ Cooperation partnership (HED), 2022 – 2025.

<http://charlie-project.uib.eu>

This project aims at challenging the bias in big data used for AI and machine learning by bringing a greater level of awareness regarding the negative impacts of the lack of a critical and ethical approach to techEd. Its main objectives are to link with the increase capacity of HE institutions, its teachers, and its students to provide learning opportunities that meet society needs and creating synergies between HE institutions, AE organisations and Youth organisations.



ARIEES – Alliance for Responsible and Impactful Investment in Eastern Europe – Erasmus+ Cooperation partnership (HED), 2022 – 2023.

<https://ariees.eu>

This project helps universities (and potentially adult training centres) to improve: 1) Their entrepreneurship courses by infusing impact investment know-how, 2) To upgrade the digital competences of lecturers/trainers to ensure that the impact investment knowledge can be properly infused into the learners while 3) Certifying competences and boosting the quality of entrepreneurship trainers.



FENIX – Fostering organisational resilience and adaptive management in enterprises – Erasmus+ Cooperation partnership (VET), 2022 – 2024.

<https://fenixproject.eu>

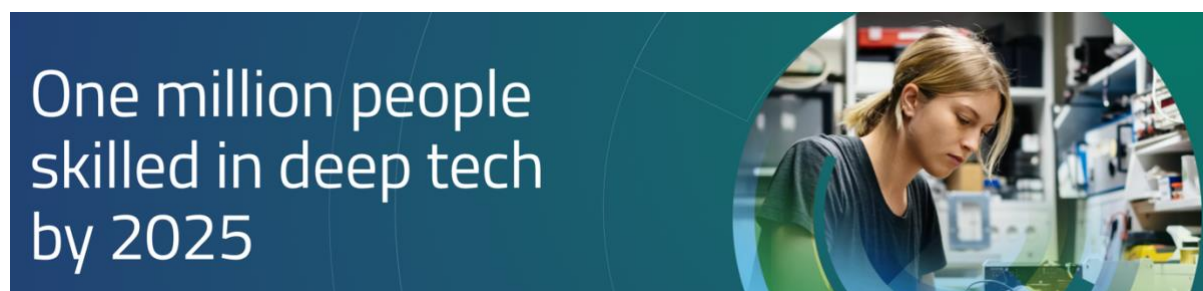
This project aims to contribute to fostering the resilience of European enterprises and their workers, through the development of an innovative gamified training experience, a guideline to support the implementation of systemic Resilience practices within enterprises and an online crash course on Adaptive Management.

3. EVENTS & MILESTONES

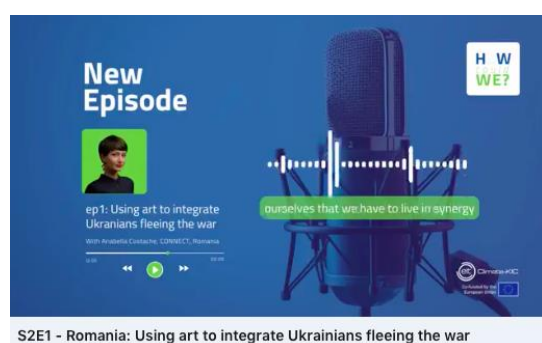
1. Helixconnect joins EIT DTTI Pledge; May 2023.

Helixconnect Europe has officially joined the EIT Deep Tech Pledge! We are proud to be among the first wave of deep tech pledgers from the EIT – European Institute of Innovation and Technology’s deep tech talent initiative. Given this opportunity, we look forward to developing deep tech talent in Europe through targeted courses running from 2023-2025, including deep tech applications for predictive maintenance covering signal and image processing, big data analytics, IoT, artificial intelligence, augmented reality, remote-accessed robotics, and digital twins via the Erasmus+ PreMETS Project (Alliance for Innovation and Enterprise), ethical AI and handling bias in machine learning via the Erasmus+ CHARLIE project (Cooperation Partnership), and integrated digital twin (BIM) modeling and AI for construction via the Erasmus+ GREENBIM Project (Cooperation Partnership).

Find out more: <https://helix-connect.com/2023/05/09/helixconnect-europe-officially-joins-the-eit-deep-tech-pledge/>



2. CONNECT project Podcast Launch; May 2023.



S2E1 - Romania: Using art to integrate Ukrainians fleeing the war

We are happy to see the outcomes of our joint work with FABER Timișoara, showcased by Climate-KIC, through publishing our first episode ‘Using art to integrate Ukrainians fleeing the war’. The CONNECT project, Community for Timișoara, targeted locals and Ukrainian refugees from Timișoara with the aim of boosting the spirit of belonging while supporting minorities and refugees to integrate professionally and through entrepreneurial pathways.

Find out more: <https://helix-connect.com/2023/05/24/connect-project-featured-by-eit-climate/>

3. GREENBIM Training by Helixconnect; Belgrade, Serbia, June 2023.

The GREENBIM co-creation academy has been completed with excellent outcomes for our joint goal: upskilling professionals at the forefront of technology to design and manage structures' energy efficiency through BIM modeling. This upskilling will pave the way for smart buildings that enable efficient production and use of renewables at the house, district, or city level. Combined with smart energy distribution systems, these advancements will facilitate highly efficient and zero-emission buildings. We have released training and micro-credentials on the preparation of Building Execution Plans (BEP) and Building Information Models (BIM) with energy efficiency objectives, BIM data systems integration with stakeholders' systems, integrated digital twin modeling from architectural design to engineering planning, parametric modeling with energy efficiency objectives, 3D, 4D, 5D, and 6D modeling for energy efficiency, sustainable applications of hybrid point cloud and BIM methods for tracking construction progress, energy-efficient renovations via BIM, and engaging society in energy-efficient BIM modeling to communicate the value of energy efficiency.



This project is a synergy with Yaşar University, Linnaeus University, Izmir Institute of Technology, ISQe, UKHO Architecture Engineering Construction and Consultancy Limited Company. Our gratitude goes to Mirjana Devetakovic from the University of Belgrade – Faculty of Architecture and Igor Osmokrovic from BEXEL for their excellent contributions.

Find out more: <https://helix-connect.com/2023/06/09/greenbim-academy-bim-energy-efficiency-and-building-digitalisation/>

4. MAAT Milestone Meeting; Rome, Italy, June 2023.

MAAT is making cities more inclusive and gender-friendly, with a significant milestone event held in Rome. We are currently conducting transnational youth policy labs to devise concrete solutions for making urban public infrastructures more inclusive and women-friendly, making urban mobility more suitable for women, ensuring urban planning includes women's needs, and reducing sexual assault in urban areas. This project builds on our past CONNECT project funded by Climate-KIC via the New European Bauhaus initiative and complements our NEB work in Romania and Serbia.



Find out more: <https://helix-connect.com/2023/10/17/9208/>

5. Helixconnect at EU Delegation to Serbia Event; Belgrade, Serbia, June 2023.

A top-class event organized by the EU Delegation to Serbia and the Government of the Republic of Serbia in Belgrade, Niš, and Novi Sad. This series of events aims to present the state-of-the-art offerings in terms of EU funds and opportunities to Serbia and its



people, covering business, education, culture, agriculture, and media. The events also showcase the excellent cooperation and integration between the EU Delegation and the Serbian Government. With intensive participation from Serbian Government officials and EU representatives, the large number of attendees witnessed the great potential of this cooperation.

As Helixconnect, we continue to support organizations in the Western Balkans and Eastern Europe, free of charge, to access training and innovation funds, thereby deepening their research and innovation excellence capacity.

Find out more: <https://helix-connect.com/2023/06/23/eu-celebrates-mutual-opportunities-in-western-balkans/>

6. SCEE2023, Riga, Latvia, October 2023.

Helixconnect Europe took the stage at the 63rd International “Scientific Conference on Economics and Entrepreneurship” (SCEE’2023), organized by the Faculty of Engineering Economics and Management at Riga Technical University (Rīgas Tehniskā universitāte). Dr. Adrian Solomon's keynote built upon work from Moow Code, DICE Accelerator, RiEcoLab Project, and BETTER Life Projects, focusing on values-based research, innovation, and development. Our work ensures innovation is driven by purpose, guided by ethics, and focused on creating positive environmental, social, and economic impacts.



This approach significantly influences R&D design, implementation, and commercialization. Our frameworks ensure successful impact achievement and measurement, with a focus on reducing environmental footprints in industrial sectors,

providing citizen science and education to at-risk social groups, promoting gender equality and inclusion in R&D, investing in impactful R&D, enabling digital transformation for impact analytics and reporting, and creating jobs and policies for sustainable regional growth.

Find out more: <https://helix-connect.com/2023/10/16/helixconnect-on-stage-at-scee2023/>

7. OSCE's Dialogue Academy for Young Women, Ohrid, North Macedonia, October 2023.



Our Junior Project Manager, Lola Vaskovic, was competitively selected and completed the prestigious 9th Dialogue Academy for Young Women organized by the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). The program aimed to equip participants with competencies in gender and youth equality, gender issues in politics, women in peacebuilding, and inclusive societies, aspects pivotal to our

mission in Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans. Our social mission in the region, which complements our technical, industrial, and scientific work, focuses on boosting citizen engagement and active participation, diminishing the impact of disinformation and fake news, mainstreaming gender equality and inclusion, providing educational and market access opportunities to disadvantaged social groups, and empowering women in science.

Find out more: <https://helix-connect.com/2023/10/17/9208/>

8. GreenBIM Pilot Training Academy; Izmir, Turkey, November 2023.

This academy aims to upskill participants that want to learn more about the basics of how to use the Building Information Model (BIM) for energy-efficient buildings, prepare a Building Execution Plan including management of energy efficiency objectives, learn how BIM Data systems are integrated with stakeholders' systems and follow keynote experts discussing how to Think Green in today's world, the role that Sustainability plays in the Built Environment, the current applications of BIM in Scandinavia and the future trends there, as well as related funding opportunities under EU Programmes. As part of this work, our Responsible Innovation Manager, Mihai Lisetchi,



delivered a targeted session on R&D funding opportunities in the field of BIM-enabled smart & sustainable buildings/construction. The funding base for this field is very broad and promising given that it falls into the umbrella of the New European Bauhaus initiative which consolidates various funding sources to tackle this specific field/challenge.

Find out more: <https://helix-connect.com/2023/11/06/our-responsible-innovation-manager-delivers-a-training-on-rd-funding-opportunities-in-the-field-of-smart-sustainable-buildings/>

9. CISCOFY Final project event; Timisoara, Romania, November 2023.



We made a strong impact at our CISCOFY final project event, where we showcased the recently released digital certification centre offering three certifications:

- 1) Certificate on open educational resource development for effective and inclusive online education,
- 2) Certificate on the “Goal Setting Methodology” as a tool for effective and inclusive online education,

And 3) Certificate on Neurolearning as a behavioural tool in online education.

Our certifications aim to prepare next-generation trainers and teachers to enhance student retention and engagement, psychological well-being, and the effectiveness of online learning. This event took place during the prestigious TIMA2023 event organized by ISIM TIMIȘOARA.



Find out more: <https://helix-connect.com/2023/11/09/ciscofy-show-cases-its-digital-certification-centre-to-a-large-audience/>

4. MEMBERSHIPS

1. Triple Helix Association

HELIXCONNECT hosts the Romanian Chapter of the International Triple Helix Association: <https://www.triplehelixassociation.org> (University of Stanford-initiated to enable university-industry government cooperation) which can bring access to: a solid and outstanding scientific knowledge base on triple helix theoretical models for market-oriented innovation development and practices to develop effective triple helix interactions combined with an international reach (+1000 members and +3.000 qualified readers on 5 continents) for dissemination, promotion, peer learning and partnership development.



2. New European Bauhaus Initiative



HELIXCONNECT is an official partner of the New European Bauhaus Initiative (500+ partners) where it provides advice on multistakeholder engagement for designing EU's new inclusive and sustainable urban spaces where democratic societal co-creation with public authorities, architects, civil engineers, designers is seen as key facilitator.

3. EIT Deep Tech Talent Initiative

HELIXCONNECT is also a member of EIT's Deep Tech Pledge through which it aims to upskill young people with deep tech skills (the majority of which are geared towards breaking barriers to education, democratic participation, and employment).



4. EIT Higher Education Initiative

This initiative is a key objective of the EIT as part of its new strategy, the EIT Strategic Innovation Agenda 2021–2027. Through it, HELIXCONNECT aims to support higher education institutions by providing expertise and coaching, access to the EIT innovation ecosystem, and funding, enabling them to develop innovation action plans tailored to their specific needs.

EIT HEI Initiative

Where can you find us?

Meet us in Romania at [FABER Cultural Centre](#) – Splaiul Peneş Curcanul 4-5, Timișoara, Romania:



Or

Meet us in Serbia at [Work Space One Belgrade](#) – Milutina Milankovića 11g, Beograd 11000, Serbia:



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