ACTIVITY REPORT 2024

– 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 2024. 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.

2024 in a snapshot:

- 24 ongoing projects worth more than 8 mil EUR for the entire network
- 35+ new talents financially supported and retained (employed) in the region via our partner network
- 1000+ upskilled and certified talents in a diverse set of fields
- 5 consolidated/continued public-private partnership agreements to support smart specialisation implementation as well as inclusive urban designs in various regions
- Expanded our office in Belgrade, Serbia
- Expanded our material science/engineering expertise with 3 large scale projects in the field of circular materials (>5 mil EUR) enabling us to launch vocational centres of excellence and to develop skills ecosystems in Eastern Europe and Western Balkans
- Organized and demonstrated our tools/products in more than 30 events with audiences surpassing 10 000 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

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.

PreVenT – Predictive Maintenance via Deep Tech Solutions for Environmental and Social Impacts in Manufacturing (vocational education) – Erasmus+ Cooperation partnership (VET), 2024-2025. https://deeptechprevent.eu

This project aims to help VET providers develop tailored industry-oriented trainings on PM via deep tech applications, while positioning VET providers at the forefront of "deep tech" and sustainable/social technological innovation education for the labor market.

TEXTSTYLE – Supporting small clothing producers to embed circular & sustainable textile processing & use – Erasmus+ Cooperation partnership (VET), 2024-2026.

This project aims to support small clothing producers to embed circular and sustainable textile processing by training them on green practices and piloting work-based learning.

WELDIFY – Deep-tech driven inclusive and socially-aware circular material joining & welding for a safe future – Erasmus+ Partnership for Education and Enterprise, 2024-2027.

This project aims to advance circular material welding (CMW) by fostering innovative, inclusive, and multidisciplinary learning through digital toolkits and hybrid teaching methods. It promotes employability, inclusivity, and regional economic growth by addressing skill gaps, enhancing safety, and integrating CMW training with the EIT Deep Tech Talent Initiative to support sustainable and resilient industrial practices.

GREENBIM - Transnational MSc in BIM and Energy Efficiency in Buildings – Erasmus+ Cooperation partnership (HED), 2022 – 2025. https://greenbim.yasar.edu.tr

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.

WELDNET – Vocational Centre of Excellence in Circular Material Welding and Predictive Maintenance – Erasmus+ Centre of Vocational Excellence , 2025-2029.
This project aims to create an inclusive, learner-centered VET program to upskill workers, including marginalized groups, in circular material welding (CMW) and preventive maintenance, addressing industrial labor needs while driving environmental and social impact. It supports the development of regional skills ecosystems in five WELDNET regions through strong public-private partnerships, aligning with EU strategies to reform VET governance, foster employment, and enhance sustainability.

ENABLE – Digital tools for supporting the employment of people with disabilities in manufacturing – Erasmus+ Cooperation partnership (VET), 2024-2025. https://enableproject.eu
Enable SMEs in manufacturing to support employees with disabilities with digital tools by certifying SMEs and staff and developing policy recommendations.

PREVENT – Prevention of natural disasters using deep technology – Erasmus+ Cooperation partnership (HED), 2024-2025. https://prevent-project.com
PREVENT aims to leverage the potential of deep tech systems in environmental applications. The project also aims to introduce new and enrich existing modules in Engineering undergraduate programmes in HEIs on technologies related to prevention of natural disasters and the use of networks of sensors for the real-time collection of data which is pushed to centrally implemented Artificial Intelligence algorithms for optimize certain conditions and/or rectify or prevent disasters.

HINTS – High Innovative VET for Green and Digital Transitions in Manufacturing – Erasmus+ Capacity Building in Vocational Education, 2024-2025. https://www.hintsproject.eu
The HINTS project is aimed at enhancing the quality and responsiveness of Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Western Balkans and South-Mediterranean (WB&SM) countries.

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.

BETTER-LIFE – Entrepreneurial & engaged life science universities – Horizon Europe, 2022 – 2025. https://betterlifehorizon.eu
The general objective of the project is to establish the EU Digital Centre of Excellence for Socially Engaged Research in Life Sciences (hereinafter EU BETTER Life Centre).

DICE – Digital accelerator for socially engaged students – Erasmus+ Cooperation partnership (HED), 2022 – 2025. https://www.diceaccelerator.eu
The DICE Project will develop a scalable acceleration program to advance digital CE courses for university educators and programme directors to design and implement their own courses.

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.

REED – Redesigning Education for Ethical Digitalization: Crafting a Social and Environmental Sustainability Mindset for Future Technology Leaders – Erasmus+ Cooperation partnership (HED), 2024-2025. https://reed-project.eu
This project aims to boost readiness, resilience and competences of academics by providing knowledge/tools to address ethical issues and risks that arise from the Digital Economy and digitalization.

RiHEI – Responsible and Impactful University Transformation in Georgia – Erasmus+ Capacity Building in Higher Education, 2023-2026. https://www.rihei.eu

The general aim of RiHEI is to transform the Georgian HEI ecosystem into an engine of sustainable and responsible (socially, environmentally) growth for enterprise and job creation by investing in the capabilities of youth and better connecting education, research and innovation with private sector needs.

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.

DEEBTIOTECH – Deep tech in bioentrepreneurship: immersing the next generation university startups and research commercialization in life sciences towards social and environmental impact – Erasmus+ Cooperation partnership (HED), 2024-2026.

DEEPBIOTECH aims to modernize life science education and research by fostering entrepreneurship, digital transformation, and engagement. It empowers students and entrepreneurs to integrate deep tech into life science startups, facilitates spinoffs and technology transfer, and drives economic, environmental, and social impact through innovation.

INTERGAMES – Incorporating Interdisciplinarity in Secondary School Education Using Conflict Video Games – Erasmus+ Cooperation partnership (SCH), 2023-2025. http://intergames-project.com

This project aims to enhance secondary school curricula and build teachers' and students' capacities by introducing interdisciplinary approaches to education through conflict video games.

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.

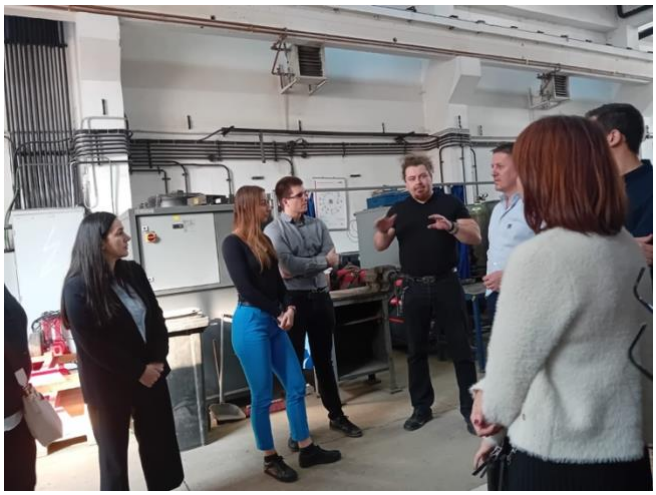
ENTRENEET – Entrepreneurial and digital entrepreneurship courses for NEETs – Erasmus+ Cooperation partnership (YOU), 2023-2024. https://entreyouthproject.eu
This project aims to help solve urban challenges of sustainability, circularity and inclusion through training youth on the know-how and experience to provide added value in alternative food networks by embedding sustainability and circular economy practices.

GenAI – Generative AI Skills for youth – Erasmus+ Cooperation partnership (YOU), 2024-2025.
This project aims to empower youth to engage with generative AI (and/or other similar tools), highlighting its applications, and limitations by introducing these tools to Generation Z, ensuring they are digitally ready to capitalize on the opportunities GenAI offers.

FOR-J – FOstering alternative means of conflict solutions through Restorative Justice practices and innovative tools – Erasmus+ Cooperation partnership (YOU), 2024-2026. https://for-jproject.eu
The FOR-J project aims to share good practices at the European level related to conflict management between youth, with a special focus on conflicts arising out of migration backgrounds and discriminations.

3. EVENTS & MILESTONES

1. HINTS: Green and digital transitions for VET institutions in Western Balkans and South Mediterranean; March 2024.



We have just launched another leading initiative (HINTS) that will transform vocational education and training institutions (VET) in the Western Balkans and South Mediterranean regions.

HINTS aims to improve the quality and responsiveness of VET to align with current social development strategies for the transition to a green and digital economy.

The technical and administrative development are led by our strong partners - ISIM TIMIŞOARA (National Institute for Welding and Material Testing). The project contributes to the implementation of the Economic and Investment Plan in third countries not associated to the Erasmus+ Programme by fostering skills development ecosystems.

Find out more: https://helix-connect.com/2024/03/08/hints-green-and-digital-transitions-for-vet-institutions-in-western-balkans-and-south-mediterranean/

2. BETTER LIFE develops AI-assisted tool designed specifically for Early Career Researchers; April 2024.

BETTER Life Project addresses the lack of collaboration between early career researchers and the non-academic sectors by designing tools, standards, and framework conditions and implementing these solutions in the regional ecosystems. We are offering a Digital Centre with hands-on toolkits for supporting socialengagement of early career researchers (https://lnkd.in/dBh7bV7z).
All our toolkits are publicly available here: https://lnkd.in/d_EjR369.



Find out more: https://helix-connect.com/2024/04/22/better-life-develops-ai-assisted-tool-designed-specifically-for-early-career-researchers/

3. SHIFT creates an ESG compliance index for universities; May 2024.

What are Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) heading towards in their seek to support the global transition to Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) targets ?
In simple terms, to a big data-driven complexity that triggers massive transformations within HEIs' governance and regional innovation ecosystem interactions.



The university transformation roadmaps (around the globe) took many shapes over the past 20 years, stemming from the market-driven pressures of promoting HEIs' third mission, or HEIs' entrepreneurial abilities to actually looking into how HEIs can trigger social good (via social engagement) and better driving the growth of their regional innovation ecosystems.
As a response to this, we are proud to be working on the SHIFT Project – HE with a strong international team. This initiative aims to increase the capacity of HEIs to contribute to SDGs. This will be done via a bespoke ESG Impact Index platform tailored for the needs of HEIs that will enable HEIs better account for their ESG impacts within their regional innovation ecosystem. Stay connected for our beta-releases of the platform !

Find out more: https://helix-connect.com/2024/05/22/shift-creates-an-esg-compliance-index-for-universities/

4. Transforming universities to become engines of regional growth; September 2024.

Over the past days, our Innovation Manager Mihai Lisetchi presented our team's various solutions for boosting regional innovation and specific recommendations for universities on how to become engines of regional transformation.
This took place during the CRAI Conference (The Entrepreneurship and Innovation Network Conference) organised by Facultatea de Automatică și Calculatoare – TUIASI.
The key expertise of our wider network's know-how is defined into the RiEcoLab Project model which introduces a forward-looking governance model for higher education institutions.
The RiEcoLab vision for a commercially-oriented, research-led university is not only to excel in research and innovation but also to enhance its role as a successful teaching institution, where educators can effectively guide students toward entrepreneurship.
Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) plays a crucial role in this by engaging internal actors, including non-research-focused teaching staff, with commercially-oriented research. This engagement helps to boost their entrepreneurial skills and encourages them to adopt a more market-oriented approach in their teaching.



At the heart of this integrative approach is the Ecosystem Integration Lab (EIL), a specialized unit within the university that acts as a central coordinating body for all research and development activities, including the crucial stages of commercialization. The EIL takes on a comprehensive role, orchestrating the research design and implementation process through the lens of Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI). This approach ensures that ethical considerations, societal impacts, and inclusivity are embedded in every stage of the research process.

By involving internal actors such as managers, administrators, finance teams, educators, students, and ethics committees, the EIL fosters a collaborative environment where diverse perspectives contribute to the research outcomes.

Find out more: https://helix-connect.com/2024/09/24/transforming-universities-to-become-engines-of-regional-growth/

5. BETTER LIFE showcased at ACEEU's Europe-Africa Forum; October 2024.



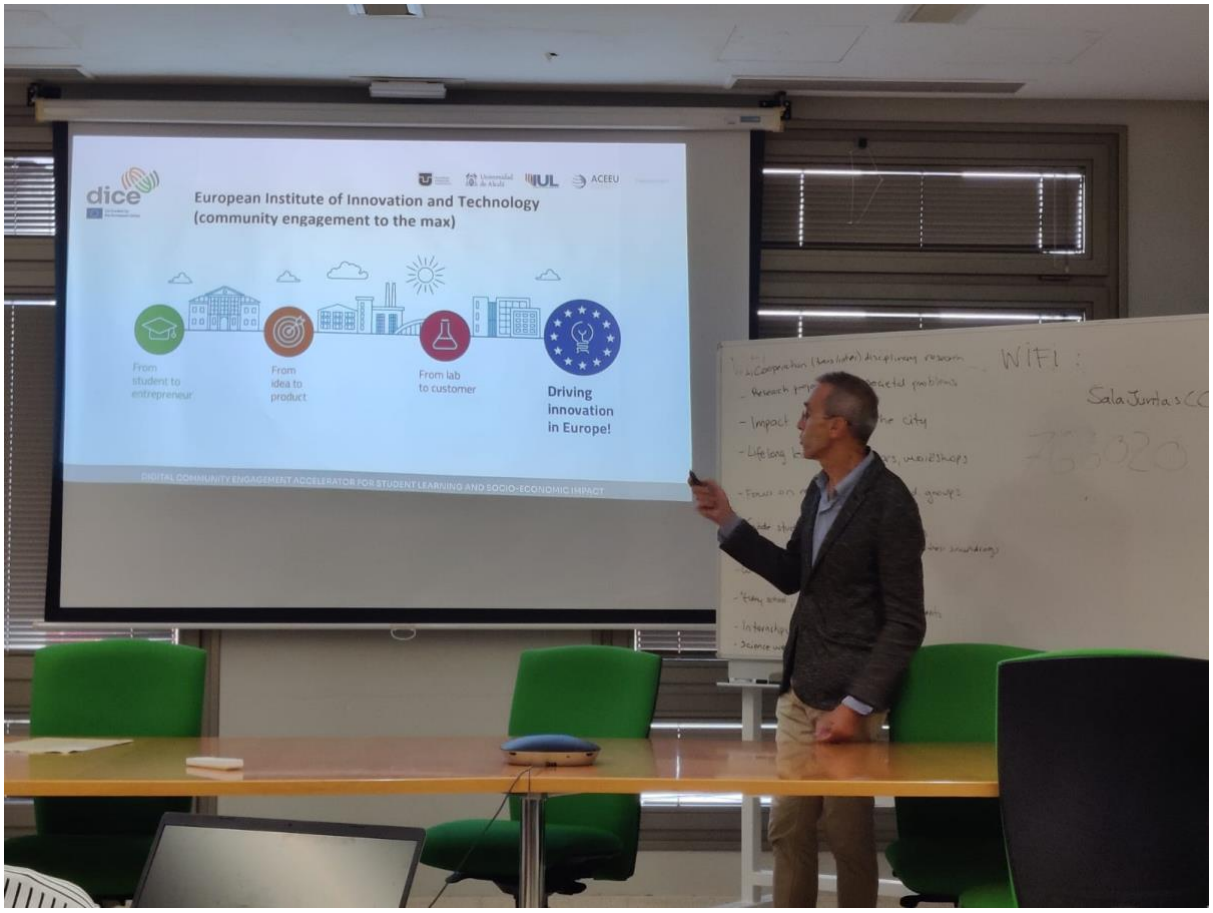
Sharing best practices from our cutting-edge projects is a key priority for us.

Recently, our Innovation Manager and lead Material Scientist Emilia Binchiciu co-convened the BETTER Life Project workshop featured as part of ACEEU's Europe-Africa Forum held in Lisbon, Portugal. BETTER LIFE aims to bringing excellence to transformative & engaged research in life sciences through integrated digital centres. This workshop came into the context of the wider theme of the forum: fostering entrepreneurial and engaged universities that lead regional growth.

Find out more: https://helix-connect.com/2024/10/03/better-life-showcased-at-aceeus-europe-africa-forum/

6. DICE Workshop on Digital Community Engagement; October 2024.

A very successful workshop on digital community engagement was hosted in October by Universidad de Alcalá as part of the DICE Accelerator Project.
Our innovation managers Emilia Binchiciu and Mihai Lisetchi contributed to the event by actively show-casing project results and funding opportunities for digital community engagement.



Find out more: https://helix-connect.com/2024/10/21/dice-workshop-on-digital-community-engagement/

7. GREENBIM 3rd academy completed; November 2024.

GREENBIM‘s third academy was just completed !
GreenBIM responds to the energy efficiency targets of the EU by upskillign engineering workforce in BIM and energy efficient buildings. The project provides certification courses for the training of professionals at the forefront of the technology that could contribute to designing and managing the structures’ energy efficiency through BIM. This paves the way to smart buildings that could enable efficient production and use of



renewables at house, district or city level. Combined with smart energy distribution systems, they will enable highly efficient and zero-emission buildings.
In this context, the third public academy was just wrapped up in Izmir and covered the following certification courses delivered by Yaşar Üniversitesi (Yaşar University), Izmir Institute of Technology.

Find out more: https://helix-connect.com/2024/11/14/greenbim-3rd-academy-completed/

8. Entrepreneurial Herstory Celebrated at the Youth Projects Gala in Timișoara; November 2024.



About the Youth Projects Gala
The Youth Projects Gala is a long-standing tradition in Timișoara, serving as a platform to recognise and celebrate the best projects by young people and initiative groups. Awards were presented to the most innovative youth and student projects, outstanding volunteers, and influential youth workers, making it a cornerstone event in Timiș County's youth calendar.

About Entrepreneurial Herstory
The Entrepreneurial Herstory project is an initiative that promotes gender-inclusive entrepreneurial opportunities, equipping young people with the tools to shape a more equitable and innovative future.

Find out more: https://helix-connect.com/2024/11/27/entrepreneurial-herstory-celebrated-at-the-youth-projects-gala-in-timisoara/

9. On the stage at ECON2024; December 2024.

It is a great pleasure to have our project manager Lola Vaskovic representing us at ECON annual meeting at Universidade do Porto !



ECON is a network established with the aim of strengthening the collaboration, expertise, analyses and objectives of organisations in Europe that promote European policies. Particularly for us, it provides a good platform for meeting partners and co-producing innovative ideas for our future products and services that build upon our work stream that serves the citizens.

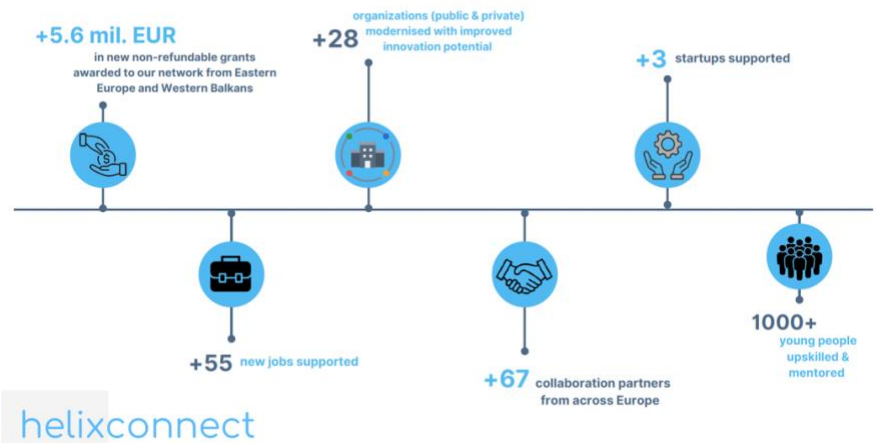
Find out more: https://helix-connect.com/2024/12/06/on-the-stage-at-econ2024/

10. Our impact in 2024

As 2024 is closing, we would like to take a moment and look back at all the impactful work we have done with our partners over the past 12 months.
We stand by our mission of building true regional innovation ecosystems in Eastern Europe and Western Balkans by applying science-driven approaches across various key developmental sectors and themes:

1) Engineering & material science
2) Higher education transformation
3) Just societies & community development

With 120+ international partners and 30+ projects implemented since 2021, we are grateful to our strong community of collaborators that work with us constantly to achieve such impact.
Looking forward to producing more impact over the years to come !



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

New European Bauhaus

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).

eit Tech Talent

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 Peneș 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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