TRANSFORM4EUROPE:
THE EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY FOR KNOWLEDGE ENTREPRENEURS

T4EU Innovative Teaching Prize

Implementation report

Lead Beneficiary
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1. Executive Summary

The T4EU Innovative Teaching Award was created to support innovative and creative teaching projects among the alliance members. The primary purpose of this award is to identify, acknowledge, and recognize innovative teaching practices. It also provides opportunities for sharing and exchanging best practices and encourages cooperation between higher education institutions, particularly its teachers and researchers within the Transform4Europe (T4EU) alliance. Furthermore, it contributes to the visibility of T4EU and promotes its branding within the alliance and beyond.

Table 1. Basic Facts.

Title and scope	Eight T4EU Innovative Teaching Awards (Prizes).
Thematic areas	The growth of students' entrepreneurial mindset; Inclusive teaching and learning in higher education; Challenged-based, digitally enhanced learning and teaching; Internationalization of teaching and learning.
Organiser	Vytautas Magnus University as the lead institution, in collaboration with the Professional Development Virtual Office (PDVO) and all six member institutions of the T4EU alliance.
Applications	A total of 45 teaching staff members: 15 in 2022 and 30 in 2023.
Evaluators and stakeholders	Members of T4EU teaching staff, students, "Association of School Principals of Lithuania", business companies – as stakeholders from the T4EU regional transformation network, etc.

The primary target audience was the teaching staff of partner universities across BA, MA, and PhD programs. The winners were selected by a diverse international evaluation committee comprising teaching staff, stakeholders, and students from all alliance universities.
The competition for implementing innovative or creative teaching projects was organized twice: in 2022 (Round I) and 2023 (Round II). To attract attention and incentivize academic staff participation in this competition, eight certificates and specific T4EU Innovative Teaching Prizes were awarded, each worth €2,500.

2. Task Development and Implementation

2.1. Concept

The concept of the T4EU Innovative Teaching Award was collaboratively developed by experts from Vytautas Magnus University (VMU) and all partner universities within the T4EU alliance. This concept was agreed upon in collaboration with the Professional Development Virtual Office (PDVO) and presented in deliverable D4.4, titled 'Concept of the Teaching Academy for university teaching staff' (delivered 31.12.2021).
The T4EU Innovative Teaching Award recognizes exemplary **practices in four categories:**

Category 1. The growth of students' entrepreneurial mindset.

Category 2. Inclusive teaching and learning in higher education.

Category 3. Digitally enhanced learning and teaching.

Category 4. Internationalization of teaching and learning.

These categories align with the primary horizontal focus areas of the T4EU alliance:

- Digital transformation and smart regions.
- Environmental transformation and sustainability.
- Societal transformation, community building, and inclusion.

The competition was open to teaching staff from partner universities involved in BA, MA, and PhD programs. Participants were recruited through an open call, and comprehensive documents were provided to clarify the **rules for application** and selection criteria, including:

- An online application form.
- A call for applications.
- Composition of the selection committee.
- Specific evaluation criteria for applicants and evaluators.

The selection of winners was carried out by a **diverse international evaluation committee** representing teaching staff, stakeholders, and students from all alliance universities, including:

- 3 members of the teaching staff from partner institutions of the T4EU alliance.
- 2 students from partner institutions of the T4EU alliance.
- 2 independent experts (stakeholders, etc.).

Eight winners were awarded certificates recognized by partner universities and monetary prizes, contributing to the promotion of innovative teaching practices within the alliance.

2.2. Implementation and communication

The call for the T4EU Innovative Teaching Award was announced twice, in the spring of 2022 (Round I) and 2023 (Round II). The details of these calls and the results of the initiative were extensively communicated across the T4EU network through various communication channels, including e-mail networks, T4EU events, the official T4EU website, university websites within the T4EU consortium, partner newsletters, and social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram.

2.2.1. *Implementation of the first round in 2022 (I)*

A total of 15 applications were received for the Innovative Teaching Award. The four most innovative teaching staff members from the T4EU alliance were selected by a seven-member committee consisting of staff, students, and stakeholders.

Table 2. The best-rated Innovative Teaching ideas of 2022.

Name of the innovation, winner or a team, the	A short description of the innovation

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represented university	
1) Educational Escape Room – Monika Frania from the University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland	The optional Educational Escape Room course is an example of good didactic practice for teaching adults, where education meets fun. Participants, divided into project teams, deepen their digital skills and social competencies, taking part in an adventure during which they not only solve puzzles but have to create their escape room. For this, one needs knowledge, creativity, and determination. In education, overcoming difficulties is essential, and the escape room is an example of a challenge.
2) Critical Thinking and the Digital Gender Divide: Transforming Students' Mindset for a Better Future – María D. De-Juan-Vigaray and María Elena González Gascón from the University of Alicante, Spain	The purpose of this good practice is to discover whether Active Learning methodology using different technologies contributes to improving the Critical Thinking of the student body, applying it to the Digital Gender Divide. The importance of the practice becomes relevant in the context of European higher transformation to students of the Business Administration program in their final semester of studies, who are about to become professionals entering the labour market.
3) Intensive Care Medicine and Pain Therapy – Tobias Hüppe and Department of Anaesthesiology, Intensive Care Medicine and Pain Therapy from Saarland University, Germany	"Masterclass: Intensive Care Medicine" is offered synchronously as an interactive live event. Fifteen internationally experienced intensivists give 15 seminars (120 min each) and include the topics of Shock and Resuscitation – Cardiac Disease – Respiratory Disease – Renal Disease – Infectious Disease – Surgical – Medical Ethics in ICU. The course includes clinical case scenarios, ventilator curves and biochemistry, blended learning with a video-based visit to the intensive care unit, principles and content of evidence-based critical care medicine and an online final exam. Live demonstrations of intensive care interventions (intubation, bronchoscopy, thoracic drainage installation, cannulation of an ECMO, etc. on cadaver preparations) are intended to convey the practical elements of intensive care medicine.
4) Visible Interactive Speaker for International Best Learning Experience – Marcel Lauterbach from Saarland University, Germany	Programming skills for data analysis are taught in an international online class to interdisciplinary students from six universities. The class uses a virtual webcam to make the lecturer visible in the PowerPoint slides, which creates a personal link with the students. Using a "virtual webcam" that overlays PowerPoint and the webcam, the presenter becomes visible IN the slides, not in a separate small window. Exercises with personal tutoring in breakout sessions give immediate feedback to the students, and in-class discussions with them contribute to community building and inclusion.

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During the first T4EU alliance's international conference-hackathon titled 'Transform4Europe International Conference-Hackathon for Innovative Teaching and Learning Methods in Higher Education (INNO-METHODS),' held from October 24 to 27, 2022, at Vytautas Magnus University, the four winners of the first round were officially announced. To give the initiative more publicity, the winners were invited to a live award ceremony and were given the opportunity to present their innovations during the conference (for details, see the program).

The winners received certificates recognized by partner universities and monetary prizes. Each of the four winners was awarded a monetary prize of €2,500, which was transferred directly to their respective bank accounts after the official award ceremony in Kaunas during the conference. The results were extensively communicated within various T4EU networks, on the official T4EU website, and across social media platforms, including Facebook and Instagram.

2.2.2. *Implementation of the second round in 2023 (II)*

In 2023, a significant increase in applications was observed, with a total of 30 submissions received for the T4EU Innovative Teaching Award this year. The increase in submissions demonstrates the importance and visibility of the award among teaching staff. A committee comprising six members representing staff, students, and stakeholders from the T4EU alliance assessed the applications rigorously to select the four most innovative teaching staff members.

Table 3. The best-rated Innovative Teaching ideas of 2023.

Name of the innovation, winner or a team, the represented university	A short description of the innovation
1) ABC of Visual Thinking and Sketchnoting by Magdalena Christ from the University of Silesia in Katowice	The classes aim to familiarize participants with the theories underlying visual thinking, as well as the representatives of sketchnoting and their work as inspiration for their development in this area. During the course, students acquire skills in creating visual notes as a form of organization and presentation of thoughts and ideas, which can be used to improve the learning process and in various branches of professional life.
2) Creation of Life Escape Room by Evelina Bendoraitienė from Vytautas Magnus University	The good practice involves assigning a group homework task to students in a financial calculations course to create a life escape room. Working collaboratively, students design puzzles, challenges, and a narrative that incorporate course content and require the application of financial calculation skills. This hands-on approach enhances understanding, promotes critical thinking, teamwork and creativity, and provides a practical context for learning.
3) Digital Entrepreneurship: Digital-	DIGEN-DIT is a digitally-enhanced, international module. Students from all T4EU and Ukrainian partner universities can participate due

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enhanced and International teaching of Digital Entrepreneurship by Benedikt Schnellbächer and Josef Alexander Schöneseiffen from Saarland University.	to its hybrid format, supported by digital tools (e.g. mentimeter). The course encompasses a lecture and a tutorial. The lecture provides students with digital entrepreneurship content from strategy to operational level. In the tutorial, student teams develop and present a startup concept in a pitch event. Lastly, students visit another T4E university to work on an entrepreneurship challenge.
4) Universal Game Design for Learning and Game Co-design for Student-centered Learning by Giovanni Bacaro from the University of Trieste	Novel educational technologies and methodologies that create enthusiasm among students and promote learner engagement are becoming instructional priorities across all disciplines of STEM. Game-Based Learning has established itself as a methodology that addresses students' engagement at different levels (student-centered learning, constructivist approach, shared social experience, systems thinking, and so on). A generalized Game Design Methodology (GDM), which includes the basic principles of the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework, is proposed here. Each phase is designed to allow students and teaching staff to develop the game and assess its progress throughout the entire process.

During the second T4EU alliance's international conference (September 26-27, 2023) at Trieste University, Italy, the four winners of the second round of the Innovative Teaching Award were announced during an official award ceremony. As in the previous year, the winners received certificates and monetary prizes. Each of the four winners was awarded a monetary prize of €2,500, which was promptly transferred to their respective bank accounts following the conclusion of the official award ceremony in Trieste.

The results were extensively communicated within various T4EU networks, on the official T4EU website and across Facebook.

3. Transferability

Generally, the implementation of this task proceeded smoothly, with the only insignificant delay occurring during the concept development phase, which took slightly longer than initially anticipated. However, once the concept was finalized, all subsequent steps were executed according to the planned timeline. The academic staff willingly participated in this initiative, and the effective and transparent organization of the award gave a lot of visibility to the T4EU initiatives and established a new brand within the T4EU alliance.

It is noteworthy that the achievements of this task were widely communicated to the academic members of the entire alliance. Additionally, all partners fully recognize the value of T4EU Awards certificates as an integral part of their staff's professional development. These certificates are integrated into various aspects of staff development, including inclusion in yearly work plans, incorporation into annual performance assessments, and informal recog-

nition by management, among other uses. In the future, the achievements of award recipients will be officially recorded on T4EU staff cards (T7.1), further emphasizing the significance of these recognitions in the professional growth of our staff.

T4EU aims to sustain this award to recognize excellence in the institutional transformation process. During the new project phase, starting in November 2023, this award will also be extended to community members to enhance visibility and strengthen the T4EU identity. To ensure equal opportunities for both academic and non-academic staff, there is a plan to establish a similar award for non-academic staff as a motivating element to participate in T4EU activities. Moreover, it will emphasize the importance of high-quality teaching and the exchange of best practices.

For the long-term sustainability of this initiative, T4EU aims to sustain this award through sponsorship from partner universities and regional stakeholders, such as the T4EU Regional Transformation Network.