

*The Results of the Project Higher Education
Teachers' Digital Literacy Improvement
Výsledky projektu Zvyšování digitálních
kompetencí vysokoškolských učitelů*

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The ongoing Fourth Industrial Revolution and the environment of digitalisation have a significant impact on the whole society. This development also affects the education system, especially higher education teachers. It is necessary to adequately respond to the mentioned changes, as confirmed by the international document 'Horizon Report' or the national document 'Digital Education Strategy for 2020'. According to these documents, modern teachers need to use digital technologies to support pedagogical approach and didactic practice. Therefore, the University of Finance and Administration (VŠFS) educates its teachers also in the field of digitalisation. For this reason, in 2020, 2021 and 2022 VŠFS implemented the European Economic Area (EEA) project focused on improving the digital literacy of higher education teachers (EHP-CZ-MOP-2-003).

The University of Finance and Administration, as a project applicant, is truly international. Since its foundation VŠFS has always paid attention to scientific work and international cooperation. It continuously organises international conferences and scientific seminars, solves a number of research tasks and participates in professional projects for state institutions and private companies. VŠFS has been and is a partner university of international projects focused on Corporate Social Responsibility (Erasmus), Competence in EuroPreneurship (EU), and Competencies of Higher Education Teachers (EEA). VŠFS has also been developing cooperation with foreign universities and participating in international programs of student exchange, summer school and Erasmus Plus programme. These days it has a large number of foreign students.

The University of Agder (UoA), as a project partner, works systematically to increase their international research collaborations through participating in more EU projects, increasing researchers' mobility and strategic collaboration with selected institutions and countries. The university has several H2020 projects, mainly in the fields of information and communication technology. The University of Agder coordinates the project 'iTrack', among others, and it is also part of several Interreg and Creative Europe projects. EU projects gather Europe's researchers and research groups, and in collaboration with the business sector, they resolve challenges for the community and technology sector. The University

of Agder is a member of the University of the Arctic (UArctic). UArctic is a cooperative network of universities, colleges, research institutes and other organizations concerned with education and research in and about the North.

The objective of this project was to improve the digital literacy of higher education teachers. The objective was accomplished by sharing digital literacy via bilateral teaching mobility. The project has been almost carried out in line with the project plan and with the objective set. The all planned mobilities from VŠFS to UoA (2 participants in November 8–12, 2021, 4 participants in April 25–29, 2022) have been carried out. However, despite careful planning and a flexible approach only 1 mobility out of 2 from UoA to VŠFS (1 participant in December 13–17, 2021) had been implemented. The second mobility from UoA was planned in May 23–27, 2022; unfortunately, the participant from UoA cancelled the mobility claiming heavy workload due to a sick colleague. Implemented activities fulfil the program indicators. At the same time, the goal to improve the digital literacy of higher education teachers is being achieved.

A wide range of activities have been carried out at UoA. According to the pre-defined plan, the activities started with teaching shadowing in subjects focused on Business English and statistics topics (here it is necessary to mention the advanced digitalization of classrooms, modern ICT and its active use during sessions). Equally important was the following test and visit of the university's video and audio laboratory, where it is possible to record educational videos or audio podcasts at a highly professional level (this possibility of education has proven itself not only during the SARS-CoV-2 situation, but also it is an essential element of distance education in the current environment). Also, the discussion with the management of the faculty about ethics in education at UoA, career growth of higher education teachers, their salaries and much more were very stimulating, fruitful and interesting.

The intensive project programme continued at the university's second campus and other departments. Among the plethora of inspiration, it can be mentioned the professionally built laboratories of the Faculty of Health and Sport Sciences. They are equipped with the necessary software and digital reality. At the same time, they are conceived as real places for research, development and innovation of facilities for disadvantaged people. The project participants also attended an international workshop on digitalization of maths teaching, a training course on digital technology and its use in teaching, and an interdisciplinary meeting on development of a business game. Another outstanding activity, which precisely fulfilled the objectives of the project, was the visit to the university laboratories for future teachers. Designed for students of all ages, this lab offers all didactics activities from the physical to the digital.

At VŠFS a project workshop was undertaken. It was held in hybrid form, being realized in the congress centre of VŠFS and via MS Teams as well. Over 50 participants were present in this hybrid environment. The opening topics were presented; the structure and principles of higher education in Norway, a programme for quality in education, and other social matters. Among the broader topics were the 'flipped classroom', interdisciplinary teaching with 'ActionBound', digital games as an education method, and the peer-tea-

ching approach. However, the main theme was 'The Escape Room as a tool in teaching and assessment'. It is an HTML game in which the goal is to "escape" by solving various puzzles. The puzzles are tied to subject knowledge, general knowledge, ability to find solutions, ability to cooperate, and so on. This was then followed by teacher shadowing and a top management faculty meeting.

The project allowed teachers improve their digital communication with students. The need for the education of higher education teachers in the fields of didactics, digitalisation, applications, and more, is a necessity of time. Society development, digitalisation, and student requirements increase tenfold. Sharing of the experiences of teachers between the Czech Republic and Norway helped reduce these differences. The Czech project participants gained theoretical backgrounds and knowledge of the education system in Norwegian higher education. Using such a project and training, teachers will improve their pedagogical skills at the level of soft skills as well as hard skills. Higher education teachers supported by this project will thus be able to lead adequate teaching in the digital environment, by digital methods and digital approaches allowing for a more professional approach to higher education students.

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