

PROJECT: SIMULATION OF SUSTAINABLE INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS (SOS IB)



Co-funded by
the European Union



The international strategic project Simulation of Sustainable International Business (SOS IB), supported by the Erasmus+ Programme, brings together three higher education institutions from the fields of accounting, finance and management, as well as an institute for corporate social responsibility, with the aim of developing digital simulations of sustainable international business. The simulations will be performed in a purposely-designed digital tool and adapted for a mobile game. They will enable (online) international collaboration of lecturers through common introduction of innovative pedagogical methods and development of teaching content and international collaboration of students in joint learning through practical simulated cases. Throughout the project, we will also observe how the introduction of international innovative digital learning practices impacts the internationalisation processes in the participating higher education institutions. We are looking forward to successful collaboration, and are inviting other interested colleges, HEIs, companies, NGOs, and individuals to join us.

About the project

The three-year international project Simulation of Sustainable International Business (S.O.S. International Business or SOS IB) addresses the need to make teaching and learning practices more accessible and internationally connected by introducing innovative teaching methods and digital tools.

It is a project by three small higher education institutions (HEIs) from Croatia (RRiF College of Financial Management), Bulgaria (VUM – Varna University of Management) and Slovenia (VŠR – College of Accounting and Finance) as well as the Croatian Institute for Corporate Social Responsibility (IDOP), and was approved under the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union (Key Action 2: Cooperation Partnerships in Higher Education) at the end of 2021.

VŠR and RRiF have been looking for ways to improve the participation of their students and lecturers in internationalisation processes for a long time. Due to the specific profiles of both – students are mostly employed and have families, and the teaching staff is often active in the real sector – the arrangement of physical mobility is difficult. They are thusly less likely to benefit from internationalisation.

Our needs analysis identified a solution in form of a digital tool that would enable international collaboration and networking of students and lecturers through developing and solving simulations of the real problems in the field of sustainable international business.

Moreover, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic all of the partner HEIs have also recognised the shortcomings of their digital readiness, particularly in the digital literacy of students and lecturers, in maintaining motivation and memorising digitally delivered study content, as well as in maintaining interest in teaching virtually. This prompted us to reflect on the digital possibilities of enhancing the teaching content that would at the same time enrich the pedagogical processes, contribute to better content development, knowledge acquisition and understanding, and ultimately raise the digital capabilities of everyone involved.

Accounting, finance and management are the main fields of the study programmes of the partner HEIs. However, the specifics of national legislations make international cooperation in education in these fields (especially accounting) more challenging and therefore less frequent. Needless to say that the globalised business reality is completely different.

Additionally, the reality of climate change calls for comprehensive introduction of sustainability in all these study fields, which is why we decided to invite the IDOP institute to participate in our project. The Institute, which specialises in introducing sustainable dimensions in different business entities' operations, will ensure that our digital learning content is in line with the latest guidelines on sustainability in (international) business.

The objectives and purpose of the SOS IB project are also in line with the European Union's vision of a digital and sustainable transformation of European societies and economies, as pursued in — among others — the European Green Deal and Europe's Digital Decade.

Project results

DIGITAL TOOL FOR SIMULATIONS

A digital tool for (collaborative) development and implementation of digital simulations of sustainable international business operations, which will be useful in both higher education and business environments. Anyone will be able to produce the content of the simulations. A user guide (with examples of simulations) will be included in the tool itself.

SIMULATIONS OF SUSTAINABLE INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS

Examples of simulations of sustainable international business, which will be tested in teaching processes of the partner HEIs during the project lifetime and further disseminated among other interested HEIs and stakeholders.

MOBILE GAME A mobile game on sustainable international business for individual learning. It will be based on the method of gamification, but without the interactivity of simulations.

CASE STUDY A study on the effects of digitalisation of study processes on internationalisation in small HEIs, based on mixed research methods from social sciences, will be conducted throughout the project. Its findings will be presented publicly at the end of the project.

Project objectives

- design and develop a free digital tool for simulation of sustainable international business for teaching purposes in higher education and business;
- train the teaching staff to use digital simulations and related methods of innovative pedagogy in higher education teaching processes;
- train the teaching staff to integrate sustainability into international business curricula;
- develop and test the developed digital simulations of sustainable international business in the teaching processes of the partners and other interested higher education institutions or companies;
- develop and implement 1-day training modules on using the digital tool for teaching in higher education and business;
- develop a user guide and a tutorial for the digital tool (for students and lecturers);
- adapt the developed simulations and develop a free mobile game on sustainable international business for interested learners;
- carry out a case study about the strengthening of internationalisation through digitalisation of teaching practices in smaller HEIs – the project partners.

Project activities

In the first half of the project, we will develop and design the technological solution for the digital simulation tool, train our teaching staff to use it, after which they will start developing the learning content for the simulations of sustainable international business with the support of the IDOP institute. The tool and the simulated cases will then be tested and improved in our classrooms. The simulations themselves will link different subject areas (of the partner HEIs) and the knowledge necessary for successful international business. This will provide both our lecturers and our students with valuable international and interdisciplinary experience. In parallel with testing the tool in teaching and learning processes, we will develop a mobile game that will

deliver the developed content of simulations of sustainable international business in a non-interactive way to anyone in need of knowledge from this field (e.g. in companies, NGOs, etc.).

In the second half of the project, we will start with trainings for future users of the developed tool in HEIs or (within) companies. We will also develop new examples of simulations with interested HEIs, which will be used in further learning processes within the new partnerships after the end of the SOS IB project. Throughout the project, a study of the impact of introducing digital teaching processes on the internationalisation of smaller HEIs will be carried out. We will publicly present its findings to both national and international professional and broader audiences at the end of the project. The project partners will continue to use the developed project (teaching) content and tool after the end of the project. We hope for a broader use of the tool and a design of joint simulated cases with new partners at home and abroad. This will facilitate the involvement of students and lecturers in international, multidisciplinary and modern educational processes.