



## **INCEPTION REPORT**

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## CONTENT

1. FRAMEWORK .....	4
2. BACKGROUND OF THE PROJECT .....	5
3. UNDERSTANDING THE PROGRAMME LOGIC .....	6
4. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY .....	8
4.1 Conceptual framework .....	8
4.2 Data collection Tools and Sources .....	9
5. IFI INTERVENTION LOGIC .....	10
6. EVALUATION QUESTIONS / EVALUATION MATRIX .....	10
6.1 Questions at Output level .....	10
6.2 Questions at Project level .....	13
7. JUDGEMENT CRITERIA .....	13
8. NEXT STEPS .....	14

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr Roberto Escarré is a Monitoring & Evaluation Expert of international projects in the field of Higher Education; a Consultant, with a PhD in Economics (Topic: "The Role of Higher Education in Building Human Capital. Impact Evaluation of Higher Education Capacity Building Interventions in Developing Countries"). He has several years of experience as an evaluator for different organizations such as the European Union, the European Patent Office or the World Bank. Focus areas include R&D, Intellectual Property, Internationalisation or Social Innovation, among others.

## 1. FRAMEWORK

The Academic College of Tel Aviv Yaffo, Project Coordinator for IFI Project, selected Dr Roberto Escarré as Expert to undertake the external formative evaluation of the main results achieved.

Main focus of the Evaluation will be the analysis of the main results achieved by the project. In order to do that the Evaluation has been divided in 2 steps:

### **Inception phase**

The Evaluator will propose and agree with the coordinator a Intervention Logic for the project. Based on the Intervention Logic the evaluator will finalise: 1) the Evaluation Questions with the definition of judgement criteria and indicators, the selection of data collection tools and sources; 2) the evaluation methodology, and; 3) the planning of the following phases. Deliverable: Inception Report

### **Evaluation phase**

The Evaluation phase will include: 1) In-depth document analysis (focused on the Evaluation Questions); 2) Semi-structured Interviews and Focus Groups with all relevant stakeholders and beneficiaries; 3) Gathering of primary evidence with the use of the most appropriate techniques (online questionnaires, etc.); 4) Data analysis; 5) Final analysis of results (with focus on the Evaluation Questions); 6) Formulation of the overall assessment, conclusions and recommendations; 7) Reporting. Deliverable: Final Evaluation Report

## 2. BACKGROUND OF THE PROJECT

**Innovative Finance Inclusion in Academia and Field / IFI** is an Erasmus+ Capacity Building joint project co-financed by the European Commission, within KA2 – Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices – **Capacity Building in the field of Higher Education**. The project was selected in 2020.

### Objectives

General Objective: To establish sustainable and inclusion finance benchmark in Israel through academic-industry cooperation, promoting innovative technological platforms and training and practice framework creation for integrated collaboration and student empowerment.

IFI specifically aims to:

- Creating sustainable finance benchmark for field assessment, and platform for systemic data on SF practices & tool by January 2022
- Stressing interdisciplinary character of SF industry to engage 30% creative and innovative non-finance students and professionals (to lead fund, create ventures and teach school kids)
- To engage (>25%) students from disadvantaged background to offer inclusion ideas and aspire for employability
- To disseminate the project's results to institutional (VARAM, HE management), national (HEIs high schools) and international (disadvantaged communities, SDGs projects) groups
- To ensure sustained capacities for ongoing academy-Industry cooperation activities in 5 partner HEIs and promote adoption of project result's in 5 non-partner HEIs by 2024

**Consortium.** IFI involved a consortium of 13 partners, including 7 partners from Israel- with The Academic College of Tel Aviv Yaffo coordinating as the lead partner.

- The Academic College of Tel Aviv Yaffo
- Sapir Academic College
- Kibbutzim College of Education
- The Hebrew University of Jerusalem
- Bezalel – Academy of Arts and Design Jerusalem
- Tel Hai College
- National Union of Israeli Students
- European Foundation for Management Development
- Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg
- Universidad de la Iglesia de Deusto
- Erasmus University Rotterdam
- Università degli Studi di Padova
- Estonian Business School

### 3. UNDERSTANDING THE PROGRAMME LOGIC

**Capacity-building projects in the field of higher education (CBHE)** are transnational cooperation projects, based on multilateral partnership, primarily between higher education institutions from Programme and eligible Partner Countries. The aim of these projects is to support eligible Partner Countries to:

- Modernise, internationalise and increase access to higher education;
- Address the challenges facing their higher education institutions and systems;
- Increase cooperation with the EU;
- Voluntarily converge with EU development in higher education; and
- Promote people to people contacts, intercultural awareness, and understanding.

There are two **kind of actions** funded by this program:

- Joint projects, which aim to support organisations from partner countries (i.e. through curriculum development, modernisation of management, etc.); and
- Structural Projects, which aim to strengthen higher education systems and promote reforms at national and/or regional level

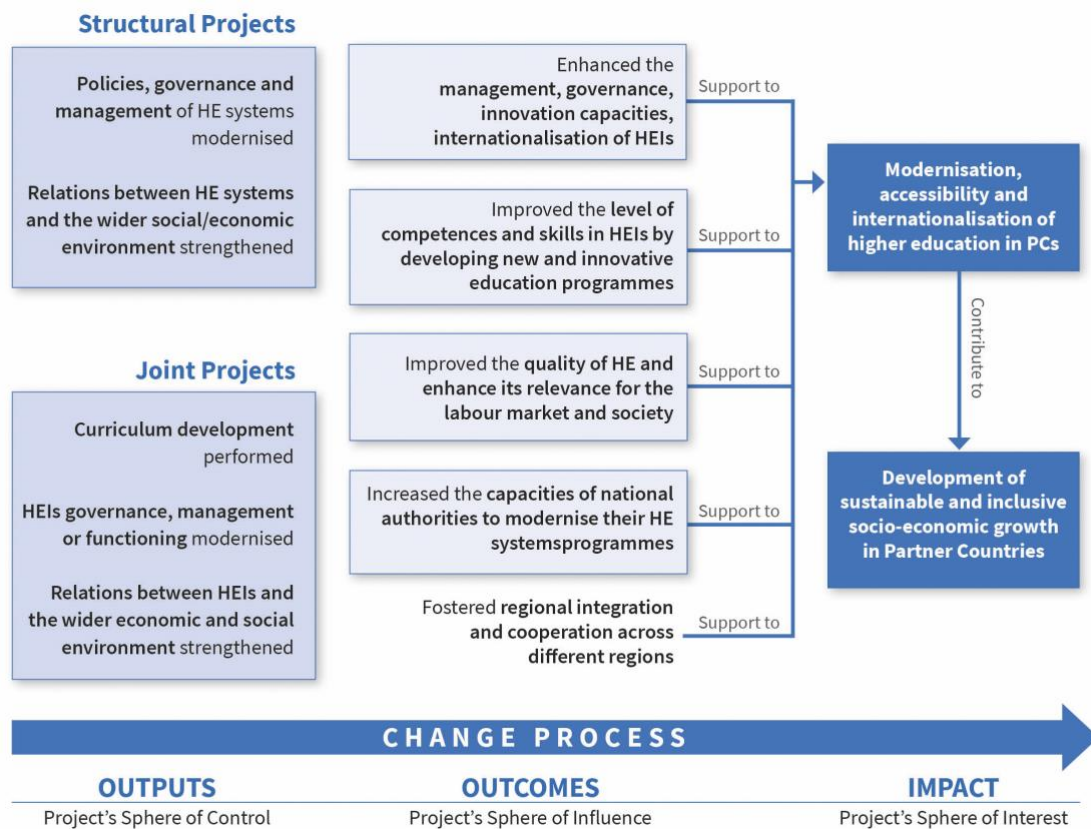
Every CBHE call funds a number of projects (joint and structural) which are divided by regions. All these different projects have their individual objectives and underlying Theory of Change (ToC). Projects contribute to development changes at different levels (see CBHE Theory of Change below).

At the **output level**, E+ CBHE supports interventions producing different types of deliverables (e.g curriculum development, modernisation of governance/management of HEIs, improvement of relations with other actors, etc.). All these deliverables are achieved in partnership between Higher Education Institutions from Programme and Partner Countries.

At **outcome level** we can identify different outcomes: a) Enhanced the management, governance, innovation capacities, internationalisation of HEIs; b) Improved the level of competences and skills in HEIs by developing new and innovative education programmes; c) Improved the quality of HE and enhance its relevance for the labour market and society; d) Increased the capacities of national authorities to modernise their HE systems; e) Fostered regional integration and cooperation across different regions. These outcomes imply changes in performance, behaviour, etc. These outcomes are no longer within the sphere of control, but within the sphere of influence of the project.

At **impact level** the main change envisaged is always a developmental objective - long term. The program basically focuses on the modernisation, accessibility and internationalisation of higher education in Partner Countries (PCs), which may contribute to the development of sustainable and inclusive socio-economic growth in PCs. Implicitly it is also about a changed role of the universities from partner countries as actors of change (medium-term). Through a successful achievement at the outcome level, universities from PCs could become an agent of change for the society. With this change, and the achievements at the outcome level, there could be a sound contribution to development changes. These outcomes are no longer within the sphere of control, but within the sphere of influence of the project.

Figure 2. Theory of Change of Capacity Building in the field of Higher Education projects



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IFI is a **Joint project** within the theme of “Relations between HEIs and the wider economic and social environment strengthened”. The country applied is Israel.

The project was approved in the framework of the Call 2020 EAC-A02-2019-CBHE. This call received 1005 applications and only 164 were selected for funding.

## 4. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

### 4.1 Conceptual framework

The Evaluator applied the overall theoretical/methodologic model, presented below as a general umbrella framework, for other evaluations of the Erasmus+ Capacity Building for Higher Education (CBHE) programme.

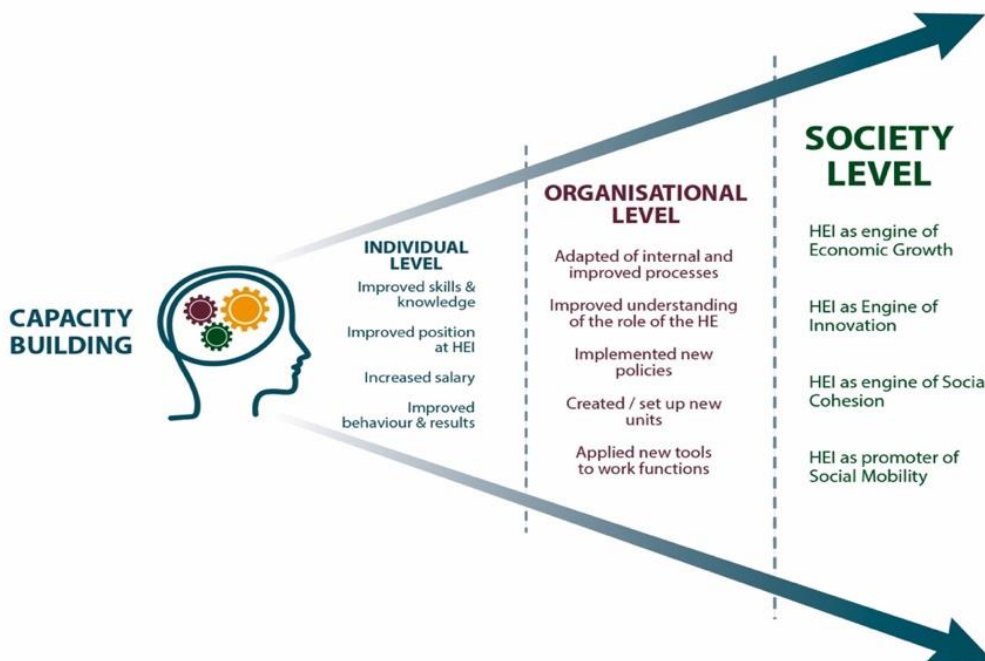
Following Baser and Morgan (2008)<sup>1</sup>, there are three levels of capacity:

- A micro or individual level, where for instance skills acquired by formal education, training or other forms of learning could be included.
- A meso or organisational level, which could comprise institutional building via efficiency of processes.
- A macro or society level, including any activity which could affect the enabling environment (policies, etc.).

The conceptual framework applied to the CBHE projects is represented in the next figure. This figure helps to explain the overall evaluation framework of the programme logical intervention and results. This is a simplified model, not pretending to include all potential elements affecting this type of intervention. The basic idea is to identify the relationships between:

- The logical and expected cause-effect relationships between inputs, outputs, outcomes and impact
- The effects at different levels of the programme/intervention;

#### Impact Levels in Capacity Building projects the field of Higher Education<sup>2</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Baser, H., & P. Morgan (2008). *Capacity, Change and Performance Study Report. (ECDPM Discussion Paper 59B)*. Maastricht: ECDPM.

<sup>2</sup> Escarre, R. (2015) *The Higher Education Role in Building Human Capital. Impact Evaluation of Higher Education Capacity Building Interventions in Developing Countries*. University of Alicante



There are different **levels of impacts/benefits of Higher Education**, and there are also different levels of capacity development that could be applied in this evaluation framework:

- At the individual level the effects are related with improved knowledge, increased management skills and improved behaviour/results applied to Higher Education. As a consequence, beneficiaries are able to improve their individual performance, including social skills and networking.
- At the organisational level, beneficiaries may apply their new knowledge in improving either the units organisational structure and/or its organisational processes. This results in better internal coordination, as well as increased and improved relationship with their local environment. Enhanced interaction with the local environment basically allows achieving more relevant teaching and research for the socio-economic ecosystem.
- At the societal level, universities are expected to materialise this more relevant teaching and research with specific agreements and contracts with the local industry and/ or society, on placements for students or applied research that meet the needs of the enterprises and other stakeholders. The impact at societal level / long-term would include aspects like e.g. social cohesion or its role as engine of innovation and promoter of economic growth.

## 4.2 Data collection Tools and Sources

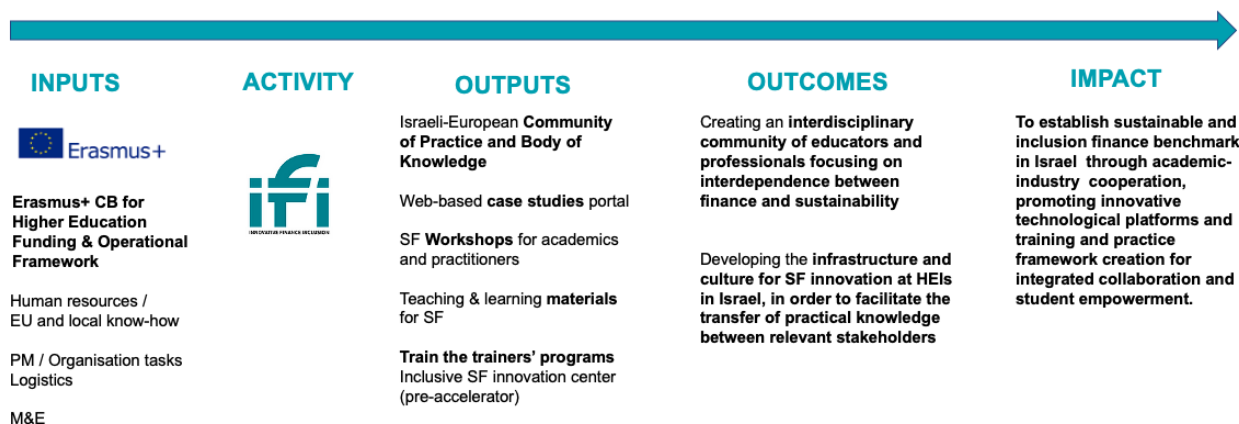
Data collection will be made using mainly the following methods:

- In-depth and semi-structure interviews with project coordinator and WP leaders;
- Online questionnaires to project participants;
- Focus group discussions and/or in-depth interviews with other stakeholders;

Data Triangulation. By using a variety of data sources, the Evaluator will triangulate data for the evaluation questions. Methods triangulation will be introduced by combining qualitative (interviews, focus groups, document analysis) and quantitative data (online survey). Researcher triangulation will be applied for document analysis and to a lesser extent during the interviews and focus groups.

## 5. IFI INTERVENTION LOGIC

The Evaluator proposed and agreed with the coordinator the following Intervention Logic for the project.



## 6. EVALUATION QUESTIONS / EVALUATION MATRIX

Based on the Intervention Logic the evaluator also proposed the following Evaluation Questions, at Output and Project level

### 6.1 Questions at Output level

Output	Israeli-European Community of Practice and Body of Knowledge
Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Introductory Seminar on Sustainable Finance in academia and field successfully executed</li> <li>✓ Survey Report identifying gaps in finance education and sustainable finance practices delivered</li> <li>✓ Work plans for task force teams agreed and running</li> </ul>
Question	<b>To what extend is the developed Community of practice and Body of Knowledge relevant to the local needs and the EU experience?</b>
Subquestions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has the rationale of the project considered as valid and correct?</li> <li>• Has the concept of Sustainable Finance been described and assessed in detail?</li> <li>• Does the developed Community of Practice and Body Knowledge match with the Israeli context?</li> </ul>

Output	Web-based case studies portal
Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Framework and guidelines for best cases collection and studying and simulation practices established</li> <li>✓ Portal set up</li> <li>✓ Study visits carried out</li> </ul>
Question	<b>Is the web-based case studies portal a relevant tool for promoting knowledge exchange between industry, academia and government in this field?</b>
Subquestions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did the consortium perform a sound analysis before implementing the web-based case studies portal?</li> <li>• Do the case studies content and variety respond to the expectations provided in the project proposal?</li> <li>• Did the consortium identify relevant organizations in Europe implementing SF on practice?</li> </ul>

Output	SF Workshops for different stakeholders
Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Traineeship programs for Israeli regulators on policy levers to foster SF established</li> <li>✓ Traineeship programs for Israeli investors in public and private sectors established</li> <li>✓ Traineeship programs for Israeli technology pioneers, designers and social activist established</li> </ul>
Question	<b>Do the traineeship programs address the needs and challenges that the trainees are facing?</b>
Subquestions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Were the consortium members able to develop a professional training plan for multiple users?</li> <li>• Were the traineeship programs welcomed / accepted by the different target groups?</li> </ul>

<b>Output</b>	<b>Teaching and learning Materials for SF</b>
<b>Indicators</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ SF Innovation Track established</li> <li>✓ Design Thinking to SF applied</li> <li>✓ Students' ideas for ventures presented</li> </ul>
<b>Question</b>	<b>Is the support (entrepreneurial track, interdisciplinary approach) provided to students relevant and fruitful?</b>
<b>Subquestions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How did students value the support offered?</li> <li>• Was the Design Thinking process successfully applied to SF?</li> </ul>

<b>Output</b>	<b>Train the trainers' program</b>
<b>Indicators</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Train the trainers strategy and framework established</li> <li>✓ Study visits performed</li> <li>✓ Training sessions for academics and mentoring on development of SF programmes carried out</li> </ul>
<b>Question</b>	<b>Is the training offered improving the professionalism in SF of Israelian academics?</b>
<b>Subquestions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was the Summer School the appropriate methodology for a SF Training for Trainers?</li> <li>• Were participants satisfied with the content provided and the selected approach?</li> </ul>

## 6.2 Questions at Project level

Criteria	Main Evaluation Question
Relevance	How relevant has been the contribution of IFI with regards to the needs identified?
Coherence	Have the IFI Intervention Logic and sequence of activities been coherent?
Effectiveness	Have the IFI activities developed been appropriate and consistent with regards to the final results?
Sustainability	Would IFI contribute to a establish a sustainable and inclusion finance model in Israel?
Impact	What has been the main impact of IFI?

## 7. JUDGEMENT CRITERIA

The evaluation will measure the scope of the actions and the impact of the activities carried out during the implementation of the project, determining the achievement of the outputs, the degree of achievement of the outcomes and its contribution to the achievement of the expected impact, as it was agreed with the Intervention Logic.

Each output will be assessed using: a) evaluation questions and indicators; b) a scoring system.

The Evaluator developed a generic scoring system which can be found in the next table. Scores are directly linked to recommendations. The lower the quality, the lower the score, the more important the recommendations are.

Scores	Definition
4 – Excellent	The overall output is of excellent quality. Additional measures are not needed.
3 – Good	Minor room for improvement exists, however with minor effect on (output).
2 – Low	Major room for improvement exists, with a potential of major effects on (output) of the project.
1 - Poor	The (output) is of poor quality and extra necessary measures are urgently need to realize the (Criterion).

## 8. NEXT STEPS

- Delivering of the Inception Report (15/11/2021)
- Approval of the Inception report by the Consortium (before December 2021)

### Evaluation phase

- Updating on Project developments, including online meetings
- Participation on Project meetings
- Organisation of evaluation activities with the coordinator and WP leaders
- Semi-structure interviews
- Focus group discussions and/or in-depth interviews with stakeholders
- Delivery of the final report