

Issue
19

September - December Newsletter

2023

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Happy Birthday!

To all our colleagues who celebrate their birthday in September, October, November and December

- Athanasia Panoutsou (EFMD)
- Shirit Katav- Herz (MTA)
- Francesco Zen (UniPD)
- Margit Kattai (EBS)
- Shir Horovitz (NUIS)
- Karin Stevenson (THC)
- Vered Haas (MTA)
- Rachel Calipha (MTA)
- Vered Holzmann (MTA)
- Dion Bongaerts (RSM)
- Volker Then (UHEI)
- Amit Marantz Gal (SAP)
- Zafir Bloch-David (MTA)
- Sonia de Pablo (UD)
- Saadat Hussain (UHEI)

WE ARE BLESSED TO HAVE YOU WITH US IN OUR PROJECT. WE WISH EVERY MOMENT OF YOUR LIFE BRINGS YOU HAPPINESS AND JOY.

"TOGETHER WE CAN FACE ANY CHALLENGES AS DEEP AS THE OCEAN AND AS HIGH AS THE SKY"

SONIA GANDHI

Welcome

Dear IFI Partners,

In September we had our WP6 Train the Trainers dissemination conference, that showcased the IFI project deliverables to Israeli teachers and trainers from various fields and institutions. A few days after that we celebrated the Jewish New Year that brought with it hopes for a better future. But those hopes were brutally cut on October 7, 2023. Our thoughts and hearts go out to all our friends and colleagues who lost their loved ones in the horrible terrorist attack. Since then, Israel is in a war that takes a heavy toll on all of us. In light of these circumstances, and in order to ensure an effective closure of the project, the EACEA has accepted our request and agreed to extend the eligibility period of the project by 4 months until 14 March 2024.

You can read about all of these subjects in this newsletter. Feel free to contact us in any issues regarding IFI. Our contact details and more relevant information can be found in the last section of each newsletter.

Vered & Vered



Review: WP6 - Train the Trainers Conference, 5 September 2023 The Academic College of Tel Aviv-Yaffo, Israel

By *Dr. Vered Haas, Prof. Vered Holzmann and Ms. Milana Yaari*

The conference was opened with greetings by **Prof. Dror Wahrman**, the president of The Academic College of Tel Aviv-Yaffo; **Einav Livne**, the director of the Israeli National Erasmus+ Office; **Prof. Vered Holzmann**, Erasmus+ IFI project coordinator, and **Dr. Inbal Abbou**, from the Kibbutzim College of Education, leader of WP 6 - Train the Trainers.



The first session was delivered by **Roe Bigger** and **Eyal Fried** from Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design, Jerusalem. They shared with the audience their insights from developing and teaching “Finance on Mars: Economy, Finance, and Responsible Investment”. It highlights a new angle of using design thinking as a tool for creating innovative ESG financial models. More information on the program and the developed tools is available on the [project website – IFI Innovative: Finance on Mars](#).



In the second seminar session, **Dr. Dan Kaufman** from Sapir Academic College presented the IFI (Innovative Financial Inclusion) simulation game. This unique educational game is aimed to be used in class, where groups of students or adults learn by experience complex issues related to the tradeoff between financial gains, and social and environmental values. The game offers the players an opportunity to explore the idea of sustainability and economics in a fun and engaging way. With the ability to buy and develop properties with different financial and well-being results, players can learn about the importance of balancing personal wealth with the well-being of their community. More information on the IFI simulation game is available on the [project website – Knowledge Base: Simulation Game](#).



In the following session the IFI online student competition for innovative social-financial inclusion was presented from two points of view. First, **Dr. Amnon Dekel** and **Shir Kahanov** from the The Hebrew University of Jerusalem explained the motivation, goals and structure of a teaching module they have developed to encourage students' entrepreneurship in the field of social-finance inclusion. The IFI partners have applied the module in a variety of courses during the academic year, and the learning experience was concluded with an international competition in which selected teams presented their ideas for new solutions that address finance inclusion challenges. Twelve teams from six higher education partner institutions took part in the online competition, held on 8 June, 2023. An international experts panel, composed of IFI team representative and external stakeholders, evaluated the presentations and posters and provided feedback. All participating students received a certificate of participation and the winning teams were announced. More information on the students' posters is available on the [project website – IFI Innovate: Student Competition](#).



In the second part of the session, **Dr. Rachel Calipha** from The Academic College of Tel Aviv -Yaffo and her students, **Nitay Roche**, **Omer Lalou** and **Ori Gutman**, presented the teacher and students points of view. The students described their experience of ideating a new solution for financial inclusion and participating in the competition. They decided the education journey they have gone through when deciding to focus on the mentally challenged population (people who are entitled to an allowance as part of a rehabilitation program) in Israel, which is estimated at 250,000 people. Their idea was to create an easy-to-use financial tool for budget management, that would help the disadvantaged population to better understand how to manage bank account, track income and expenses and define financial goals. To this end, the



team has developed the concept of an artificial intelligence based application that provides tailored recommendations and offers a game platform that encourages persistence and assimilation.

It was inspiring to hear the students sharing their significant sense of achievement and empowerment when talking about the overall experience which was a very big challenge but at the same time a great opportunity for

learning and developing skills such as preparing a presentation for investors, meeting deadlines, and presenting in English.

The next session was led by **Dr. Inbal Abbou**, from the Kibbutzim College of Education. Inbal introduced to the audience the IFI website that showcases the teaching and learning resources created by the IFI international team. Those resources include [case studies](#) and teaching notes in Arabic, Hebrew and English on a wide array of subject matter suitable for use in different academic courses; [lesson plans](#), and other tools that were presented earlier. All teaching tools are open free of charge to the public.



To present an example of the IFI case studies, we invited **Tal Shaanan** to present the case he wrote on “Inclusion through Decentralization: Blockchain Technologies as a Driver for Financial Inclusion and Social Resilience”. Tal is a research student at Haifa University and a research assistant at the Richman University Institute for Freedom and Responsibility. Tal is also a senior corporate partnership manager at the VEE startup that developed an application to manage volunteering in organizations. He approached the IFI team and offered to contribute to the pool of case studies in order to reach a wide number and variety of students. All IFI case studies, including teaching notes, are available on the [project website - Knowledge Base: Case Studies](#).



The last session was given by **Shay Shidlov** the CEO of The National Union for Israeli Students (NUIS). Shay highlighted the impact of partnering in the Erasmus+IFI project on the organization on the one hand and the importance of representing the students’ voice in addressing social finance challenges in academia on the other hand.



Shay chose to present several meaningful ways in which the organization took upon itself to promote and organize activities according to the SDGs. The first is the establishment of a new role in the organization - the head of students for climate - that coordinates between all climate activities and green organizations on campuses in Israeli higher education institutions. Additionally, through their unit for social policy NUIS is also involved in defining the criteria for “Green Campuses” in Israel. Furthermore, following NUIS’ participation in IFI, social finance criteria were added to the organization’s investment policy including having a sustainable financial plan and future incomes, having social

goals and impact on the Israeli student population and involving students in the decision making. Shay stressed that the changed caused to NUIS by joining IFI project was partly unexpected and much bigger and deeper then they imagined in the beginning of the project. The project came to NUIS in perfect timing to develop the current issues concerning Israeli and global students.

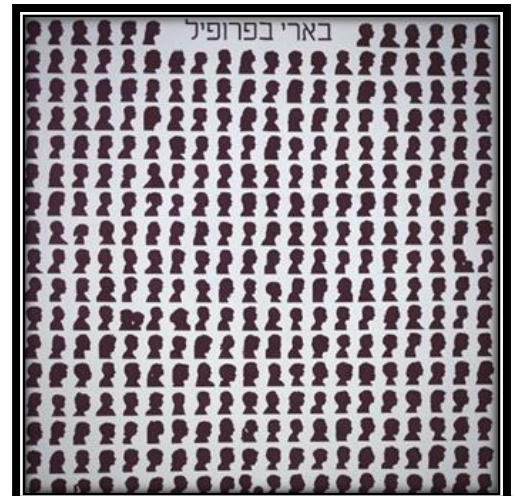
The conference was concluded with an open **Market of Knowledge**



The October 7, 2023 War

by Dr. Vered Haas

On Shabat, October 7, 2023, we woke up to an unbelievable horror scenario. That day later developed into a war between Israel and the terror organizations of Hamas in the south and Hezbollah in the north. Now, three months later, the pain and the suffering are still going on for the people of Israel, Gaza and many others in the region and around the world. Hundreds of thousands of people were displaced from their houses in Israel and Gaza, tens of thousands are displaced in Lebanon, houses, public institutions and lives are being ruined every day.



A poster produced in honor of the 40th anniversary of Kibbutz Be'eri, 1986, with the silhouettes of the members of the kibbutz (from the collection of posters from the Yad Tabenkin archives)

Our final meeting that was planned to be held in Tel Aviv on November 7, 2023, was delayed to 6-8 March 2024 and will take place in Germany. Regretfully, we will not be able to host the meeting in Israel. We thank all our European partners for their support and encouragement and our time of need, and we are deeply saddened by the unbelievable amount of death and pain caused by the terror attacks and the war.

We chose to share with you some of the challenges faced by the people of Israel by dedicating some of this newsletter to current events.



Photos by *Kfir Sivan*, from his kibbutz - Be'eri

An extract from a letter written by Dr. Paz Elnir from the Yad Tabenkin Research Center to the members of the International Communal Studies Association (ICSA), after a discussion led by researchers from the kibbutzim effected by the horrible events that took place on 7/10/23

Yad Tabenkin wishes to share with you the current painful dilemmas that the kibbutz community is facing right now. These are difficult questions about a community's continued existence and its ability to deal with an unimaginable event:

- How can a community deal with the fact that 1 out of every 4 of its members has been killed, wounded or taken prisoner?
- How can a community hold 100 funerals one after the other, when everyone knows all 100 dead?
- If the community survives, how will it continue if all the young people from the neighborhood of young people have been killed? There is no next generation.
- How will the community continue to exist when it currently has nowhere to return to?
- If it is possible to return, how will the community return to a place where in every corner there is a memory of someone tortured, burned or murdered?
- How does the individual in the community deal with the fact that eight of his family members are no longer in the community?
- How do you treat an entire community that is in trauma?
- How do the survivors come to terms with the guilt of surviving when surrounded by those that have lost loved ones?

Today we are facing these questions, and many more, after a terrorist attack the likes of which has never been seen before. Babies with their heads cut off, children and adults with their limbs cut off - tortured in cold blood, girls and women raped, babies and old people taken hostage, a quarter of the community that has disappeared and a physical place that has been completely destroyed.

We don't have the answers, but we are looking for a way.

We know that the kibbutzim on the Gaza border established exceptional cooperative societies, employing many workers from Gaza, who arrived every day, members who would regularly drive Palestinians to hospitals in Israel for critical medical care. The kibbutzim developed agriculture in the desert, built a unique culture and a liberal and democratic society.

Our hearts go out to the families of the dead, wounded, injured, kidnapped and missing from the brutal terrorist attack in the communities surrounding Gaza.

Our thoughts are also with all innocent lives affected, on both sides of the border.

As per Yad Tabenkin's mission, we will continue to tell the unique and extraordinary story of the kibbutzim and Moshavim that for years have blossomed, dedicating their lives to contribution and meaning, and ultimately defending with their bodies the Hamas terror from the Gaza Strip.



Photos by *Kfir Sivan*, from his kibbutz - Be'eri

Excerpts from an interview with our Sapir team leader Dr. Amit Marantz-Gal, from the journal "Times Higher Education". Interviewed by Pola Lam in November 2023

With less than a month until the semester begins, an Israeli higher education institution hit hard by Hamas' 7 October attacks is still healing from the trauma – but already driving long-term changes to revitalise its surrounding area.

Located near Sderot, just kilometres from the wall separating Israel from the Gaza Strip, Sapir Academic College is one of Israel's largest public institutions, usually a bustling campus of more than 8,000 students. Now, more than a dozen of its community are dead and scores more have yet to return to their homes. "Things have dramatically changed for us. What's happening now is off the charts," said Amit Marantz-Gal, an English lecturer and former head of its international office.

Sapir is no stranger to security threats. Hamas missile strikes on the area have previously targeted the university, a large gathering centre. Twelve years ago, Dr. Marantz Gal's car was bombed. Such tales aren't rare. Still, she said, recent events had been like nothing experienced before. "The idea was to stop repeating the narrative that we're constantly under attack and to move on to a narrative of academic merit".

Now, dozens of alumni, students, faculty and staff were murdered," she said. In the hours after the initial attack, Dr. Marantz-Gal, who doesn't live in the immediate area, and other faculty who weren't displaced leapt into action. "Those of us who could function split among ourselves, took lists of students and started calling everybody. 24 to 48 hours later, we sent out a form for the entire Sapir community for everyone to say where they were, what they needed".

Some 250 faculty and staff and more than 1,000 students had to evacuate their homes, which are scattered around the city of Sderot and in kibbutzim – farming collectives – in the area. Others never picked up their phones. Twenty-six Sapir students, faculty and staff were killed in the attacks. Dozens in the community lost family members and some hostages are still missing. Their absence is painful and raw.

When the university reopens its doors on 24 December – the pushed-back start date for Israeli institutions – it will be facing new challenges. More than 800 Sapir students have been called up to serve in Israel's army, depleting a 10th of its student body. Many of those who remain are still in trauma."



Sapir College in October 2023

A note by Dr. Vered Haas

The challenges that our Israeli partners are facing this academic year are numerous – about 10% of the student body were called on 7/10/23 to serve in reserve duty in the Israeli Defense Forces. They cannot attend classes until they will finish their duty and return home, and then many of them will take time to adjust to a non-military daily routine; because of the war the academic year was shortened and the first semester in most HEIs will only be 10 weeks long instead of 13-14, so classes and learning tasks need to be rewritten quickly; many of the students and teachers attending classes have firsthand knowledge of individuals that were hurt by the war, and they are distracted and not emotionally available for learning; our Israeli partners on the north and the south borders, Tel Hai and Sapir, are mostly back to full time online learning, that as we know have many disadvantages; and last but not least, there are tensions between Jews and Arabs on the campuses.

Israel have dealt with all these problems before and will find the strength and the way to survive them.

You can see the next short text, from a Facebook post of the organization “standing together” as one of the venues Israelis find of dealing with these issues.

A recent Facebook post from the organization “[standing together](#)”:



A few days ago I learned that posters hung around the campus with bilingual slogans encouraging closeness and solidarity between Arabs and Jews were torn down.

My heart is broken. As an Arab student who lived in Sderot until the disaster that happened on Shabbat, who experienced the uncertainty and fear just like all the residents of the south, it breaks my

heart to see that at this time they choose to cancel my language, who use the disaster that befell us all on 7/10 to download anything in Arabic when there are Arab citizens who died and some were even kidnapped. A fact that cannot be ignored is that there are over 2 million citizens whose mother tongue is Arabic and it is impossible to make it disappear from the area, unfortunately other students forget that we are citizens just like them and our language does not threaten anyone, but just the opposite: it is a very rich and cultured language that allows those who speak it and writes it to express himself and his feelings in a complex way.

Our future, on campus and in the country, is a shared future.

Rama Marie, a student at Sapir College

IFI Final Meeting

6-8 March 2024

The University of Heidelberg, Germany

Organized in cooperation with The Academic College of Tel Aviv-Yaffo

Introduction

After more than three years of a very productive cooperation that took place both online and face-to-face, we are excited to meet everybody for the project final meeting. We will get together to discuss the project's outcomes and lessons learned, reflect on the various challenges we faced, and envision future opportunities for collaboration. Last but not least, we will summarize this amazing journey on the individual level and the impact we have made.

Tentative Agenda

Day 1: Wednesday 06/03/2024

Time	Topic and Speaker(s)
08:30-09:00	Registration
09:00-09:30	Welcome Prof. Marc Weller , VP International Affairs and Diversity, UHEI Prof. Dror Wahrman , President, MTA Prof. Vered Holzmann , IFI Coordinator
09:30-10:45	Project Summary by WPs: Deliverables & Achievements WP1: Building a CoP and BoK WP2: Case Studies and Simulations WP3: Training for Professionals
10:45-11:00	<i>Coffee break</i>
11:00-12:30	Project Summary by WPs: Deliverables & Achievements WP4: Social and Sustainable Finance Innovation WP5: Student-led ESG Investing Funds WP6: Train the Trainers
12:30-13:00	<i>Commuting to The University for Jewish Studies (~ 20 min walking)</i>
13:00-14:00	<i>Lunch break at the University for Jewish Studies</i>
14:00-15:30	“Unraveling CSI: Social Innovation across Time and Space” Open Conversation with Prof. Dr. Werner Arnold , President, University for Jewish Studies Prof. Dr. Joachim Quack , Director, Institute of Egyptology Prof. Dr. Kathia Serrano Velarde , Institute of Sociology Prof. Dr. Dominika Wruk , University of Mannheim, Business School Dr. Filip Zielinski , CSI
15:30-16:30	Open Discussion: IFI Long-Term Impact
16:30-18:00	<i>Afternoon in the City of Heidelberg</i>
18:30	<i>Dinner in at “Urban Kitchen” (payment will be made individually)</i>

Day 2: Thursday 07/03/2024

Time	Topic and Speaker(s)
08:30-09:00	Registration
09:00-09:30	IFI Administrative & Financial Management Prof. Vered Holzmann , Project Coordinator Dr. Vered Haas , Project Administrative Manager
09:30-10:00	IFI Book - Sustainable Finance Regulation in the European Union: Pathways, Practices, and National Perspectives Dr. Dafna DiSegni , THC
10:00-10:45	General Assembly (GA) & Executive Board (EB) Meetings
10:45-11:00	<i>Coffee break</i>
11:00-13:30	GAME TIME! (IFI Simulation Game)
13:30-14:30	<i>Lunch break at "Red – the Green Restaurant" (Lunch Buffet. Payment will be made individually)</i>
14:30-15:30	IFI QA and Dissemination
15:30-16:30	<i>Traveling to Mannheim, Bus to Heidelberg Main Station, Reginal Train to Mannheim (approx. 30 Min)</i>
16:30-18:00	Guided Tour at Mannheimer Kunsthalle (Mannheim Art museum): Anna Uddenberg – Premium Economy
18:30	<i>Dinner in Mannheim at "The Rhine Terrace" (payment will be made individually)</i>
21:00 . . .	Bars and drinks in Mannheim or travel back to Heidelberg

Day 3: Friday 8/03/2024

Time	Topic and Speaker(s)
08:30-90:00	Registration
09:00-13:00	The IFI Journey (Hybrid Session) Institutional and Personal Summary and Reflections
13:00-14:00	<i>Lunch break at "Red – the Green Restaurant" (Lunch Buffet. Payment will be made individually)</i>
15:00-...	Philosophers Walk, Dinner in the City Centre

Monday Monthly Meeting

The following Monday Monthly Meeting will take place on February 5, 2024.



The agenda for the meeting includes an update on our final meeting and additional issues regarding the project's closure.

Your attendance and contribution to this meeting are important.

If you have additional topics that you would like to suggest for the agenda of the Monday Monthly Meetings, please send us an email to ifi.erasmus@mta.ac.il and veredhz@mta.ac.il.

Reminders



- Please send us your birthdate so we can congratulate you on that special day.
- If you want to join our WhatsApp group, please send us your mobile number.
- If you haven't sent us yet your personal information and a photo to be presented on IFI website, please contact us at ifi.erasmus@mta.ac.il.
- Submit your financial reports (see [templates](#)) by email to ifi.erasmus@mta.ac.il and send a copy to veredhz@mta.ac.il.
- Share with us information on internal and external dissemination events or publications.

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Project number 619453-EPP-1-2020-1-IL-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission.

This publication [communication] reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein

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