



# ECIU UNIVERSITY IMPACTA FRAMEWORK

**Individual &  
Multi-stakeholder  
Process for  
Amplifying  
Collaborative  
Transformative  
Action**

**VERSION 2.0**

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Developed within ECIUn+ WP 10 Impact & Dissemination

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## Executive Summary

In November 2020, the ECIU Board adopted a Vision for ECIU University 2030, that brings societal stakeholders, researchers and learners together to “provide European answers to future societal challenges.”



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### ECIU University Vision

We believe in a European-wide ecosystem based upon open and inclusive collaboration connecting societal stakeholders, researchers and learners to provide European answers to future societal challenges. We create a playground for solving multi-disciplinary challenges in entrepreneurial, innovative ways and provide personalised learning and career opportunities for life at the European level, enabled by a novel university model based upon co-creation. (a)

To deliver on this ambitious vision, an impact framework is needed that not only tracks past impact but is also agile and dynamic enough to adapt to the rapidly changing environments of societal challenges that are yet to be identified. Through a series of workshops and interviews with internal and external stakeholders, a shared understanding of what impact is in an ECIU University context was formed and through that, the foundational components of the ECIU Impact Framework were built; 1) Theory of Change 2) The After Action Review 3) Impact Journeys 4) Recurring Impact Check-Ins 5) Collective Impact Cases 6) The ECIU Societal Impact Dashboard 7) Impact Stories 8) The Team Impact Award. To operationalise the framework, a Dynamic Impact Toolbox has been created to support teamchairs, learners, external stakeholders and the ECIU community catalyse, capture and impact which will be tested and iterated with various stakeholders throughout the second part of the project period.

## Defining Impact

To create a shared definition of Impact within an ECIU in context we drew on 3 sources; 1) The European Commission's Definition of Impact and Valorisation 2) The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 3) Workshops and Interviews with the ECIU community.

### 1) European Commission's Definition of Impact and Valorization

As an EU funded project, we departed from European Commission's definition of impact which can be summarised as "A change or a benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life". A one-word definition is simply "benefit": how our knowledge assets benefits society and the economy. Here we distinguish between '**academic impact**', considered to be the research knowledge contribution to a field of study within academia, and '**non-academic impact**', impacts that go beyond academia, defined as follows: **Academic impact** is the demonstrable contribution that excellent research makes to academic advances, across and within disciplines, including significant advances in understanding, method, theory and application. **Societal and economic impact** is the demonstrable contribution that academics knowledge assets make to society and the economy, of benefit to individuals, organizations and nations.

A fundamental step in reaching impact is **knowledge valorization**, referring to the utilization of scientific knowledge in practice. Valorization is the process of creating value from knowledge by making knowledge suitable and/or available for economic and/or societal use and translating that knowledge into competitive products, services, processes, solutions and entrepreneurial activity. EU knowledge valorization policy covers both technological and non-technological solutions that can derive benefits to the society as a whole. It calls for the participation of all actors in the research and innovation ecosystem including users, citizens and policymakers.

### 2) The United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals are described as a blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. For the initial pilot phase, ECIU University focussed its impact efforts on SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities, with particular focus on four strategic impact areas: **Energy and Sustainability, Circular Economy, Transport & Mobility, Resilient Communities**. It is widely acknowledged that the SDGs provide a systemic overview of impact – overlapping with each other and have been described as "indivisible" - meaning that it is very difficult to isolate SDGs. WP 3's analysis of challenges according to SDG themes revealed that to date ECIU challenges have



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touched upon many SDGs and during a PCT meeting on 6 October 2023 the request was raised to broaden scope beyond SDG 11.

### 3) Workshops and Interviews with members of the ECIU Community

Through a series of workshops and interviews we distilled foundational traits of what impact is within ECIU University context the common themes were: **Positive Step Change:** A need for a clear “before” and “after” in numbers and reality, to see something tangibly change in a positive way that can be attributed to an action or set of actions. **Real:** It needs to have an impact in the world – not just theoretical or numbers **External Validation:** Positive, spontaneous feedback from society, partners and the media. **Tracking:** Goals need to be set and achieved and monitored through some form of KPI /OKR system. **Long-term:** It needs to be long-lasting / sustainable over years

## Making an Impact with ECIU University

**ECIU Impact Statement:** ECIU University brings learners, teamchers, researchers, non-academic staff and external stakeholders together to create societal impact through Challenge-Based Learning (CBL) & Challenge-Based Research (CBR). Through working together on real-life challenges, ECIU cultivates the development of transformative skillsets that produce **impactful people** and **actionable solutions** to real-life societal challenges.

The purpose of the IMPACTA framework is to **Catalyse, Capture, Communicate & Amplify Impact** via a diversity of dynamic tools the increase levels of **Impact Awareness, Ambition & Ability to contribute to positive societal change**. The IMPACTA Framework is designed to empower members of the ECIU community to actively shape their impact journey – setting their impact vision, reflecting on how their individual work and actions contributed to (and will continue to contribute to) the collective societal impact of ECIU University through the impact check-in, capturing their learnings and contributions through impact cases, curating and sharing their ECIU impact stories on social media platforms and gaining recognition through individual impact badges and the collective team impact award.

The ECIU IMPACTA framework consist of 8 components.

1. **Theory of Change** A proven methodology for planning, monitoring and evaluating that is applied as a map for impact journeys and a design for impact cases.
2. **After Action Review** Reviewing and iterating the challenge process to optimise the creation of impactful actionable solutions.
3. **Impact Journeys** connecting people across disciplines and geographies to create impact through CBL & CBR experiences.
4. **Recurring Impact Check-Ins** An easy and engaging data collection process that provides a rhythm for regular updates, reflections and impact vision setting.
5. **Collective Impact Cases** Based on the theory of change evolving each year through regular updates from stakeholders and data collected during the check in process
6. **The ECIU Societal Impact Dashboard** Collates the data from all the impact cases to provide an overview of the compounding impact of all ECIU activities.
7. **Impact Stories** A format through which institutions and stakeholders can share their impact journeys via social media and blogs.
8. **The Impact Award** An annual award for transdisciplinary teams that have showcased great impact potential.

### ECIU Theory of Change: From Input to Impact

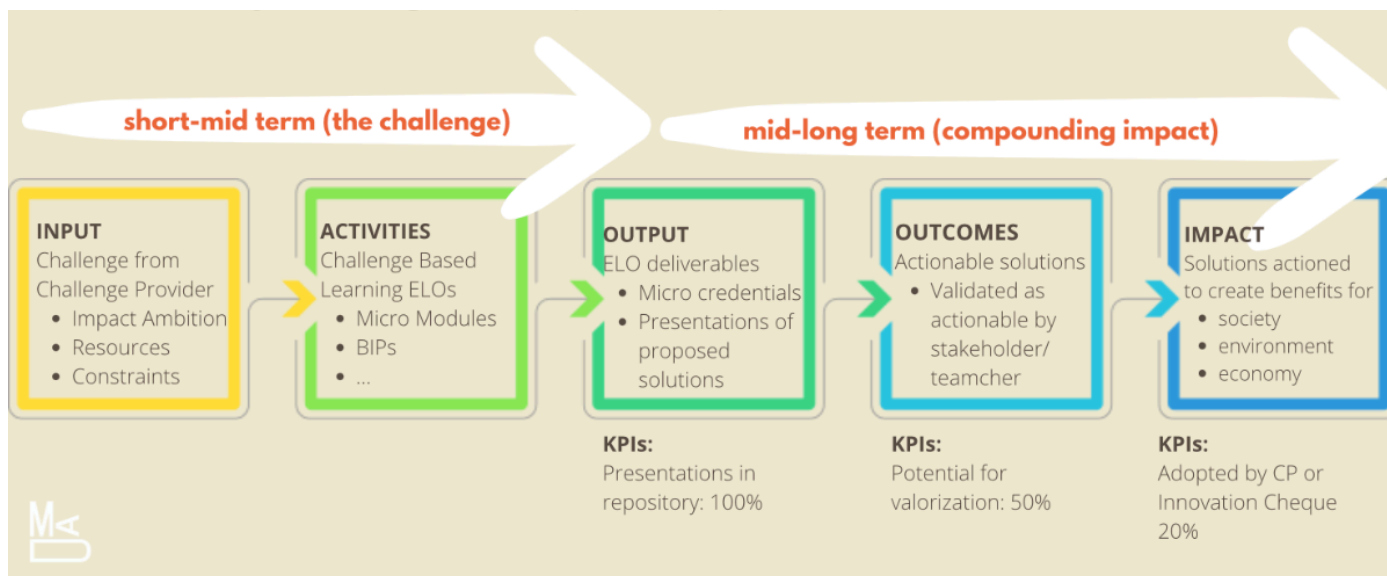
Based on a proven methodology for planning, monitoring and evaluating an impact initiative, the ECIU Theory of Change below illustrates how all stakeholders, through engaging in ECIU, contribute to transformative societal change, which is tracked through the ECIUn+ project KPIs.



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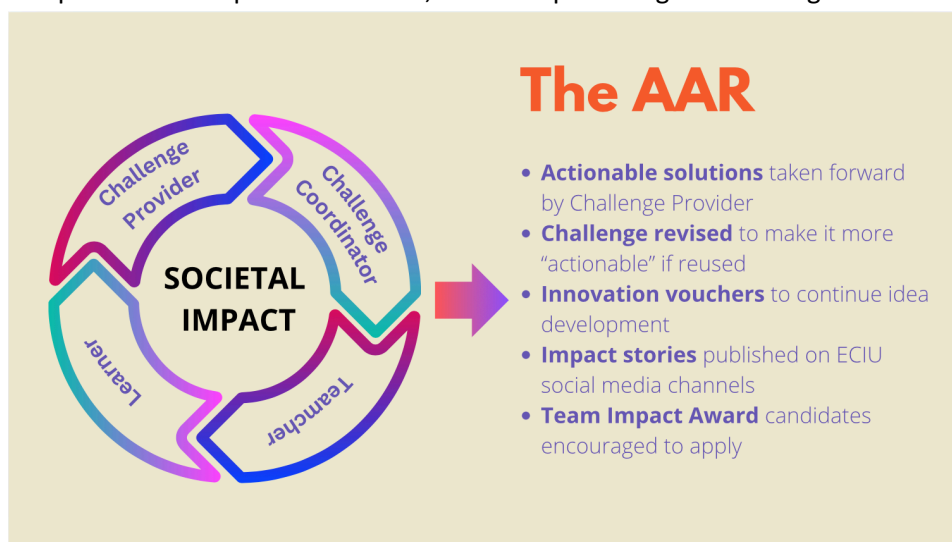
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### After Action Review (AAR)

It is appropriate to have a standardized way to end the work with a Challenge in order to maximize the potential for impact, both from a societal and personal perspective. It is also a good occasion to look backward on what movements have been done, and to look forward and establish an action plan for further activities. It is also desirable to reflect critically on our processes. An After Action Review (AAR) is a technique for improving process and execution by analyzing the intended outcome and actual outcome of an action and identifying practices to sustain, and practices to improve or initiate, and then practicing those changes at the next iteration of the action.



As a result of the AAR there is a clear path forward actionable solutions that can be resourced by the external stakeholders are taken forward by the challenge provider, challenges that did not produce actionable solutions are revised to be reused or retires, actionable solutions that want to be taken forward by the students can be put forward for innovation vouchers, impact stories are published on ECIU social media channels and teams are encouraged to apply for the impact team award.



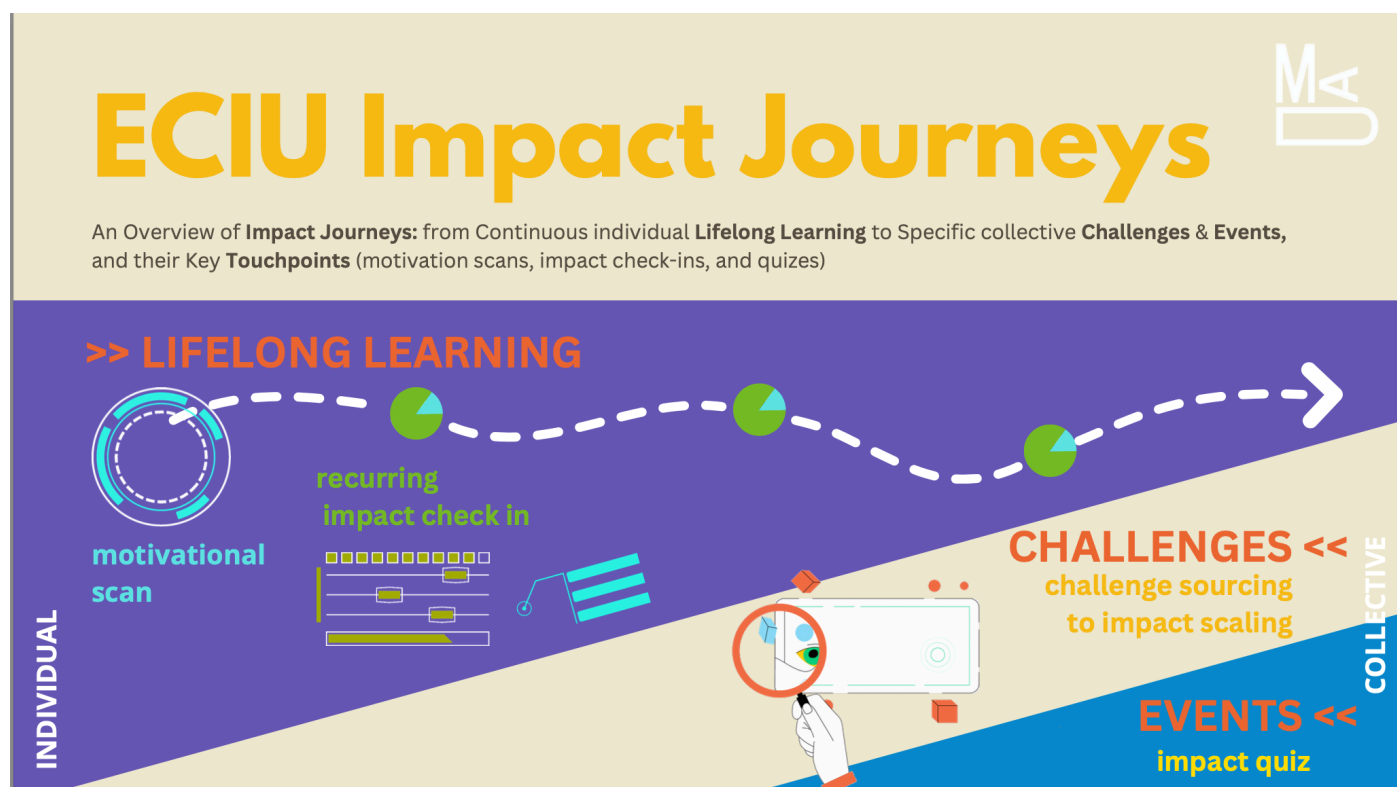
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## Impact Journeys

As stated by Sioux McKenna, “university education should bring to students a transformative relationship to knowledge” (Centre for International Higher Education conference in Boston, June 2023.) Through participating in ECIU University, all stakeholders (learners, teachers, researchers, non-academic staff and external stakeholders) can explore their potential to contribute to societal impact. Through multiple touchpoints such as motivational scans, micro modules, challenges, creathons and events, individuals build their impact capacity. With every European project they work on they grow their networks and intercultural communication abilities. This transformative skillset will be with them for life and will shape the type of active citizen are, the career path they choose and the leadership values they embody.



## Individual Impact Check Ins

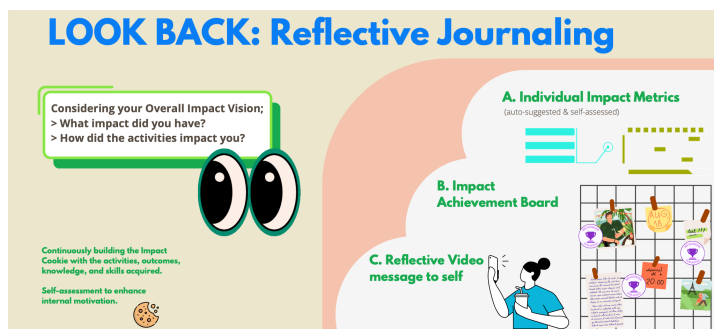
Throughout their impact journey, stakeholders are encouraged to reflect on their actions and revise their vision through recurring impact check ins. The impact check-in as a touchpoint to support ECIU stakeholders on their impact journey, creating intentional time to consider their impact on a regular cadence. Every year the stakeholders are encouraged to “look forward” by setting a personal impact vision/ambition and prompted to “look back” on their impact journey, using reflective journaling techniques. Impact badges are auto-populated through the courses, challenges and events the stakeholders have participated in. Through the recommendation engine, DXP suggests relevant future courses, challenges and events to amplify the impact journey ahead.



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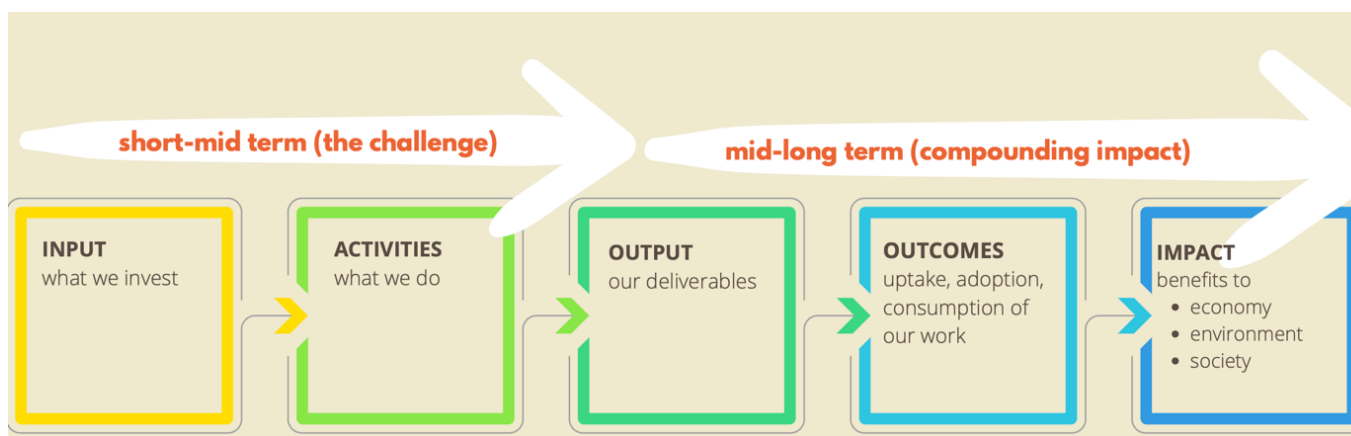
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## Collective Impact Cases

Through ECIU University's CBL approach, individuals come together in interdisciplinary teams around real-life challenges to collectively co-create actionable solutions. The same Theory of Change model ECIU uses is applied at a challenge level to provide a consistent way for all ECIU stakeholders to plot their path to impact. By completing this template at the start of CBL and CBR initiatives, stakeholders align around a theory of how they can create the change they believe will address the societal issue they are working on. It is a map to navigate a potential route to impact.



- At the start of the challenge learners and researchers conduct a baseline assessment of the current state recording metrics and behaviours that will be revisited periodically for a period of years.
- During the challenge, all resources and activities are recorded in the first 2 boxes (**input and activities**) providing a record of what components led to the desired change.
- At the end of the challenge period the 3<sup>rd</sup> box (**output**) is updated to reflect what they initially thought would be their deliverable when they started the challenge and what they actually delivered. This provides an opportunity to reflect on their learning journey and share insights that can be helpful for others in the future working on similar challenges.
- Periodically, data is provided (through the Impact Check-In) by the individuals who participated in the initiative and longitudinally we can study the adoption of the output and record the **outcome** and **impact** of the initiative on an ongoing basis.



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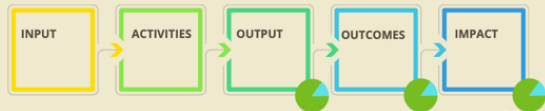
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## The Impact Journey continuously feeding the Impact Case Study

Show & Scale the ongoing Impact Journey (ToC) through the insights and data derived in the **Impact Check-ins** to feed the (r)evolutionary **Impact Case Studies**

### Theory of Change



### Yearly Impact Check-in

Challenge providers, learners, researchers, staff, industry, and public sector continuously provide input:

> Testimonials, Publications, New Evidence, and Policies (Videos, Writing, Visuals)

### Impact Case Study



Each challenge is designed to create impact in society and captured in an impact case study based on the inputs of the initial Theory of Change created during each challenge. At the end of the challenge, a case study is generated which is periodically updated by key stakeholders who are tracking the cumulative impact of the actioned solutions. The impact case study provides a snapshot of the impact of the challenge at any time. These case studies are kept in a central repository for others to draw on the insights or continue to build upon.

## The ECIU Societal Impact Dashboard

Each CBL activity and CBR project feeds into an overall ECIU dashboard that reflects the compounding impact ECIU generates and amplifies. The Impact Case Studies generated during each challenge are rolled up into the larger subset of ECIU challenges that are worked on, so the impact can be measured at multiple abstractions levels eg.

- single challenge level: “ways to reduce public transport emissions from x municipality”
- SDG 11.6 target level: “By 2030, reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities, including by paying special attention to air quality and municipal and other waste management”
- SDG Goal 11: Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

By having a standard way of inputting and extracting impact data we can zoom in or out depending on the case we want to build and share.



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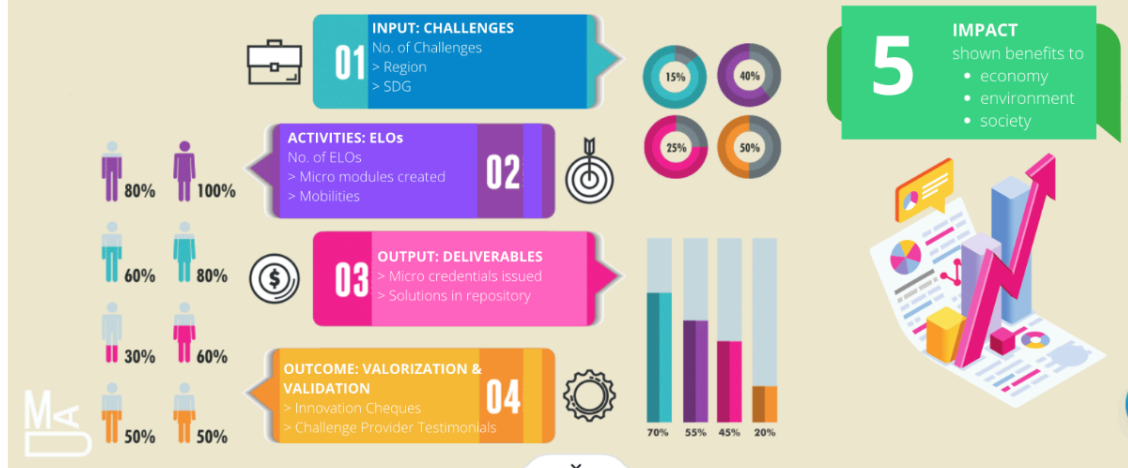
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## Societal Level: the Collective ECIU Impact Dashboard

enabling zoom in, zoom out: from the overall ECIU impact to specific cases  
filter by regions, SDGs, thematic areas, etc.



### ECIU Impact Stories

The ECIU Impact Framework enables people to tell their impact story, how through ECIU their work and actions has contributed to (and will continue to contribute to) the societal impact showcased on the ECIU dashboard. The ambition is that with the support of WP9 POCs each institution produces at least 2 impact stories annually to be shared on ECIU social media. These impact stories can be used individually to support career progression and as a team they can support in the motivation for innovation checks as follow on funding for impactful ideas. These stories form part of the dissemination strategies which includes:

- Case Studies
- Policy papers
- Brussels Impact Event
- Monthly impact story published online

### The ECIU Team Impact Award

Each year one team is awarded the team impact award for their exceptional teamwork and contribution to society which they express through telling their impact story.



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## The ECIU Team Impact Award

Share Your ECIU University Impact Story!

### The Team Impact Award Submission

Bring together photos, prototypes, videos, articles, or messages from stakeholders - you as a Team decide and get creative! The point is to create a mosaic that shows the impact you've catalyzed together :)

To help you as a Team get going, ask yourself these 2 Questions:

How has your team made an impact?  
How has this project impacted you?



To assess the impact potential of an idea, we can ask “Is the Impact REAL?”

**Relevant:** Not theoretical – outputs are in use in society. Skills / learnings are used on a daily basis.

**Evidence-based:** Can the change be validated scientifically (with a baseline) and socially (through external actors / citizens /media acknowledging the change)?

**Attributable:** Can the change be linked to activities within the ECIU ecosystem?

**Long-Term:** Is the change leading to sustainable long-term improvement?

## Operationalizing the ECIU Impact Framework with A Dynamic Toolbox

WP10 has developed an innovative impact framework of dynamic tools and methods that span individual, collective and societal levels of impact measured quantitatively and qualitatively which will be tested and iterated with Work Package Leads, Teamchairs, Learners and Stakeholders throughout the second half of the project period.

## a Dynamic Toolbox for a Dynamic world

capturing **Achieved & Envisioned Impact** in a systemic and everchanging context. Leveraging a wide range of tailored **Reflective** and **Forward looking** Formats & Methods, designed based on:

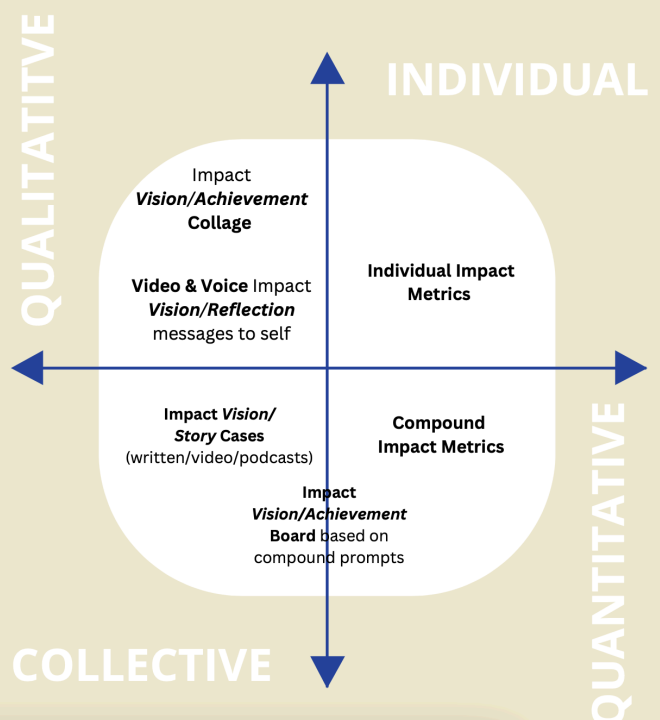
### Fusing 3 Dimensions

- Individual & Collective
- Qualitative & Quantitative
- Look Back & Looking Forward



Designed to **Look back** and **capture** the rich nature, perspectives, and power of impact

to **Look forward** to **Inspire** and **Inform** further Impact and learning.

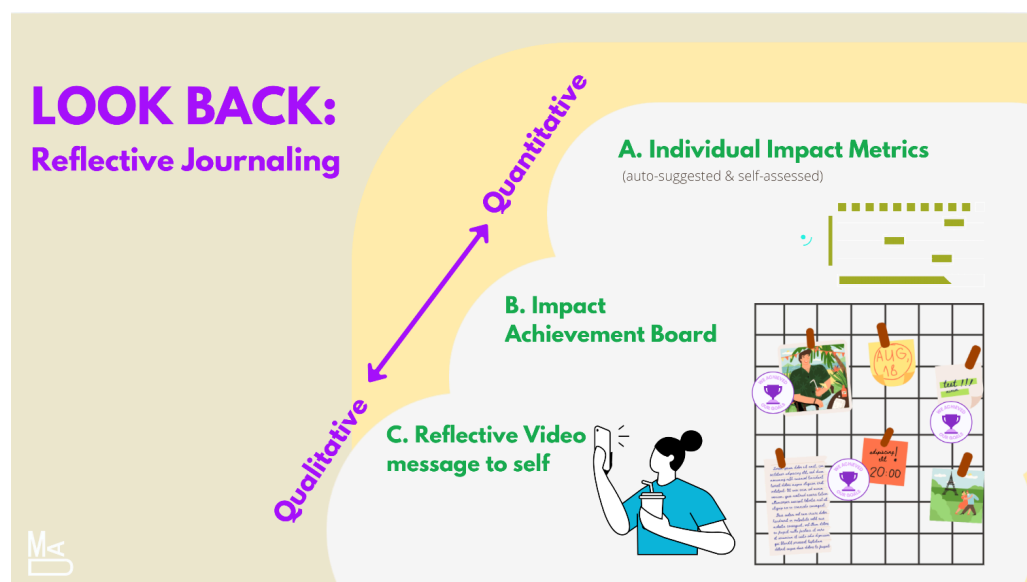


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We are taking an iterative and inclusive approach to the development and implementation of the ECIU IMPACTA framework. The first part of the project period focussed on extensive primary and secondary research which informed the creation of this draft framework which is based on the outputs from a series of workshops and interviews with representatives from different stakeholder groups (students, researchers, teamchers, ECIU staff and external stakeholders). During the second part of the project period are integrating the framework into the operations of ECIU University by working closely with WP leads and stakeholders on developing MVPs for the following tools.



Looking Back.

A stakeholder's past impact is reflected in both numbers and narrative.

### A. Individual Impact Metrics

Ambition for 2030: Auto-generated by DXP using the data from the motivation scan combined with impact metrics from each challenge they contributed to. (This is cumulative – growing each year as the impact metrics grow and the years pass.) Stakeholders can also self-assess their performance when they compare their achievements with their impact ambition which they set during the onboarding module.

MVP for 2026: Learners take a self-assessment quiz – measuring their baseline level of impact awareness, ambition and ability and retake it at the end of the semester to see if there score changes.

### B. Impact Achievement Board

Ambition for 2030: A combination of badges unlocked for impactful work, recognition from peers, challenge providers and institutions as well as the list of ECIU challenges and events attended – building with every year.

MVP for 2026: Learners track their own “impact credentials” by collecting stickers/badges for each ECIU course, challenge or event they participate in. These could be physical stickers or badges we send to them to put on their laptops or bags.

### C. Reflective Video Message

Considering their overall impact ambition, stakeholders have an opportunity to record their reflections, answering the following questions:

- What impact did ECIU have on you this year?
- In what ways did you make impact with ECIU this year?



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If stakeholders want to share their ECIU experience they can choose to upload their video reflections to ECIU social media channels or blog posts.

Ambition for 2030: Participants are sent an automated “impact reflection time” nudge, that sends them a pre-recorded message from themselves the year before when they set their impact ambition and vision.

MVP for 2026: Learners have shared blog posts or videos sharing their reflections via ECIU social media channels.

# LOOK FORWARD: Vision Setting

## Increase Impact Awareness & Ambition



### 1. CURRENT IMPACT AMBITION

How do You contribute to a Resilient & Sustainable Society:  
What is your Impact Ambition 3-5 years from now?

>> Scribble down on the 1st page



### 2. YOUR IMPACT VISION & LEGACY

At the end of your life, what impact legacy do you leave behind? that makes you feel proud

>> Scetch, draw a vivid vision!



### 3. YOUR AMPLIFIED IMPACT AMBITION?

With your desired legacy in mind, review your Impact Ambition:  
Anything you want to add, remove or change?

>> Add to your old ambition

Looking Forward.

At the start of an ECIU challenge, or new year stakeholders are encouraged to set their Overall Impact Vision and their impact ambition for the year. They upload this to their profile on DXP for others to see and also upload a video that is personal to them, that will be re-sent to them at the end of the year when they are sent the “looking back” prompt.



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