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GRANT AGREEMENT NUMBER

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A.1 – European Higher Education

ENLIGHT - EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY NETWORK TO PROMOTE EQUITABLE QUALITY OF LIFE,  
SUSTAINABILITY, AND GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT THROUGH HIGHER EDUCATION TRANSFORMATION

## Deliverable

WP No	Del. Rel. No	Del No	Title (see SygMa list)	Lead beneficiary
WP6	D6.5	D81	<b>Methodology and Toolkit 2.0 for HEI Impact</b>	UPV/EHU

Nature	Dissemination Level	Related to Del. No (if applicable)
Report	Public	D114 D79 D115 D80

### Description (short – see SygMa list)

This document presents Methodology 2.0 for the Impact Assessment of Higher Education initiatives and the related online ENLIGHT Toolkit (available at <https://impact.enlight-eu.org/toolkit/web/en>). It builds upon the first version methodological framework and tools presented in Deliverable 114 and it integrates the lessons learnt and conclusions of the impact assessment pilot case studies (cfr. Deliverable 115). Likewise, it takes into consideration the experience in developing the online ENLIGHT Toolkit for the Impact Assessment of Higher Education initiatives and the conclusions of the First ENLIGHT Impact Conference (cfr. Deliverable 80).

### Target group

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> students<br><input type="checkbox"/> teaching staff | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> researchers<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> administrative staff |
|--|---|

### How will the deliverable contribute to the goal of a Task, WP and the overall goals of the project?

Task	<b>6.2. Development of methodology and tools for HE impact assessment.</b> The deliverable presents a refined version (a second version) of the methodology and toolkit for HE impact assessment, which takes into consideration the lessons learnt of the impact assessment pilot case studies and the conclusions of the first ENLIGHT Impact Conference.
WP	<b>WP6: ENLIGHT Impact</b> The deliverable answers the general WP6 objective of “ <i>creating a comprehensive methodology and tools for measuring the long-term impact of ENLIGHT on people, communities, institutions, and systems at large</i> ”.
Project	The proposed methodology and toolkit will contribute to position and further reinforce the ENLIGHT Alliance as an impact-driven European University Alliance. Likewise, it will

	contribute to meet ENLIGHT objective of “creating and measuring the impact of its activities as model for systematic change and transformation of higher education”.
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What is the place of the deliverable in the Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle ?

DO

Which steps were needed to achieve the deliverables?

If applicable: please provide a Gantt chart or schematic of activities which have led to the actual deliverable.

Tasks	Activity	MILESTONES					
		Nov 20- April 21	May- Oct 21	Nov 21- April 22	May- Oct 22	Nov 22- April 23	May- Oct 22
6.1 ENLIGHT Impact Taskforce & Scope Definition	Establishment of ENLIGHT Impact Task Force	x					
	Scope Definition	x					
6.2 Development of Methodology and Tools for impact Assessment	Methodology 1.0 and Toolkit for HE Impact Assessment			x			
	Methodology 2.0 and Toolkit for HE Impact Assessment						x
6.3 Definition and implementation of pilot cases	Definition of Pilot Case Studies			x			
	Implementation of Pilot Case Studies						
6.4 Exchange and Dissemination	First ENLIGHT Impact Conference					x	
	Constitution and leadership of the FOREU2 Impact Thematic Group				x		
6.5 Pilot stage impact assessment	Pilot Cases' narratives with numbers and global report						x

#### Document Version Control

Version 0.1	Originated by:	UPV/EHU
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*The content of this deliverable represents the views of the author only and is his/her sole responsibility. The European Commission and the Agency do not accept any responsibility for use that may be made of the information it contains.”*

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## INTRODUCTION

### ENLIGHT and Impact

ENLIGHT is one of the 50 European University Alliances selected by the European Commission to promote a more globally competitive and attractive European Education Area and European Research Area. It is composed of 9 public research-intensive universities<sup>1</sup> committed to promote equitable quality of life, sustainability and global engagement through **Higher Education transformation**. ENLIGHT aims to undertake a “*fundamental transformation of European Higher Education that empowers learners as globally engaged citizens with state-of-the-art knowledge, skills, and innovation potential to tackle major societal transitions and to promote equitable quality of life and sustainability*”. ENLIGHT is supported by the European Commission, through Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020 programmes, as well as national and regional funding.

**Impact** is at the core of the ENLIGHT mission and one of the alliance’s distinctive features. As such, ENLIGHT seeks to promote an impact-based culture both within and beyond its universities, including the promotion of a model of good practice of impact-directed management and the integration of impact across higher education, research and innovation. In order to meet this ambition, and in the context of the Erasmus+ funded project, ENLIGHT has defined as Work Package 6 (WP6) main objective the creation of “*a comprehensive methodology and tools for measuring the long-term impact of ENLIGHT on people, communities, institutions, and systems at large in such a way that the addressed and accomplished transformations may be monitored, measured and communicated transparently*”.

### Building-up Methodology and Toolkit 2.0 for HE Impact Assessment

The present document is the result of WP 6 Task 6.2: *development of methodology and tools for Higher Education (HE) Impact Assessment*. It presents Methodology 2.0 for Impact Assessment of Higher Education Initiatives (HEI) and the related online ENLIGHT Toolkit, which is available at this webpage: <https://impact.enlight-eu.org/toolkit/web/en>

Both the Methodology and Toolkit 2.0 for HEI Impact Assessment builds upon the version 1.0 of the methodological framework and tools presented in Deliverable 114 in April 2022. It simplifies, refines and adapts the version 1.0 to the specifics of Higher Education initiatives, taking into consideration the lessons learnt and main conclusions of the impact assessment of three major pilot case studies ((1) Challenge-based Education; (2) Mobility; (3) Regional Academies)), carried out in the framework of WP6 Task 6.3: *definition and implementation of pilot cases* and Task 6.5: *Pilot stage impact assessment* (cfr. Deliverable 115).

Likewise, it also reflects the experience in developing the online ENLIGHT Toolkit, which allowed the contrast between the theoretical methodological approach and the operational user-friendly experience.

The conclusions of the [first ENLIGHT Impact Conference](#) organised on 30-31 March 2023 (cfr. Deliverable 80) and, in particular roundtables 2 (*Methodologies for impact assessment in higher education: what can we learn from the business, environmental, quality assurance and research*

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<sup>1</sup> University of the Basque Country, University of Bordeaux, Comenius University Bratislava, University of Galway, Ghent University, University of Göttingen, University of Groningen, University of Tartu and Uppsala University. The University of Bern is joining the ENLIGHT alliance as a 10<sup>th</sup> university in its next phase (2023-2027).

impact assessment practices?) and 3 (How Universities Alliances are bringing about impact and transforming the European Education Area and European Research Area?) have served to contrast and further refine ENLIGHT's methodological approach and toolkit. In the same perspective, the ENLIGHT leadership of FOREU2 impact thematic group has allowed WP6 Impact Task Force to share experiences, challenges and good practices which are reflected in the present methodology and toolkit.

Although designed in the context of the European University Alliance ENLIGHT and tested with specific ENLIGHT pilot case studies, the proposed methodology and toolkit may also be of interest for other European University Alliances or other higher education related initiatives beyond the ENLIGHT Erasmus+ project context (either in the educational, research & innovation and transfer contexts). In addition, the methodology and toolkit 2.0 is flexible and could be used for assessing the impact of other types of initiatives outside the academic context.

### Links with other ENLIGHT Erasmus+ Work Packages and ENLIGHT RISE

As previously indicated, in order to test and showcase the first methodological approach and toolkit for impact assessment, the ENLIGHT Impact Task Force has used a series of pilot case studies (Task 6.3) which are considered to be the most relevant and representative of ENLIGHT potential impact on the transformation of Higher Education. In addition, the selection of the pilot case studies has taken into consideration the degree of involvement of affected stakeholders throughout the impact assessment exercise and the data availability for capturing relevant impact-related indicators (cfr. Deliverables 78, 79 and 115 for the rationale behind the identification of the case studies).

Those pilot case studies focused on the different initiatives undertaken across the different ENLIGHT Erasmus + Work Packages and, more specifically, in WP2/ WP3 (Challenged-based Education), WP4 (Mobility), and WP5 (Regional Academies). Therefore, the state of advancement of the Methodology and Toolkit 2.0 has been highly interlinked with the state of implementation of other Work Packages' activities.

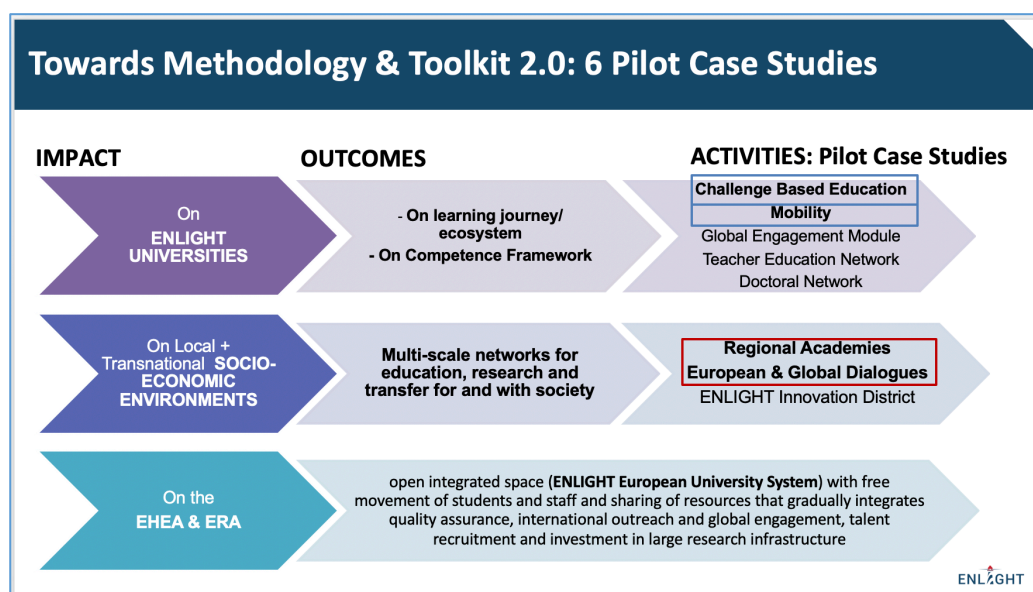


Figure 1. Impact scope and pilot case studies.

In addition, the proposed methodology and toolkit for Impact Assessment is of great value for the ENLIGHT RISE project (funded by Horizon 2020 – Science With and For Society), aiming to promote a common research and innovation agenda across ENLIGHT Universities. More concretely, it will be of high value within the context of WP8 (Impact Assessment and Frontiers of the common R&I Agenda), which aims to formalise methods towards an impact-driven R&I agenda (task 8.1.2) and to promote a culture of impact, for example through training actions (task 8.1.1).

## Understanding of Impact

Throughout the Erasmus+ project lifetime, ENLIGHT's definition of impact has been enriched with the lessons learnt from the pilot case studies, the experience of the ENLIGHT RISE project and the exchanges with other international impact experts, either in the context of the ENLIGHT Impact Conference, the FOREU2 Impact Thematic Group or ENLIGHT's participation in international impact fora (AESIS, EARMA and UIIN Conferences, for example).

ENLIGHT definition of **impact** is as follows: “*“the effects or changes that we can see (demonstrate, measure, capture) on<sup>2</sup> and beyond<sup>3</sup> academia, which happen over time because of an activity/intervention in/by the Higher Education environment”*. In the context of ENLIGHT, impact is associated to the “**transformation**” and “**value**” induced in various target groups by the different actions undertaken within the initiative/ action line.

The proposed Methodology and Toolkit 2.0 for HE Impact Assessment is based on this definition of impact. It also takes into consideration **impact assessment** as “*the identification/ measurement/ evaluation of the changes and effects, and the extent of those changes and effects on different stakeholders over time*”; and conceives it as **a complex and multifactorial phenomenon, which should be established as a continuous learning process**, helping make more accurate decisions about future action and future desired impacts (impact management).

This understanding of impact and the suggested methodological framework builds upon the current state of the art of the impact assessment study field, both in its broad conception and in the context of the higher education and research areas. For further details on the state of the art, please consult Annex 1 and the references therein.

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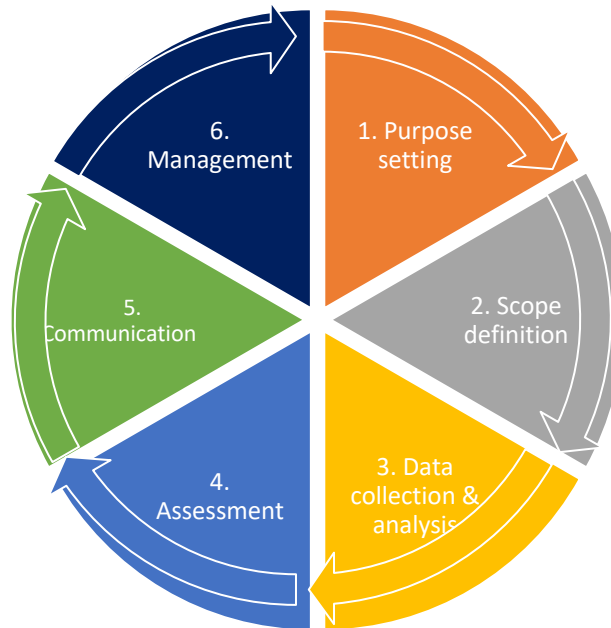
<sup>2</sup> **On** students, academics, staff, leaders, HEIs institutions, structures.

<sup>3</sup> **Beyond academia**, that is on society, economy, environment, etc.

## Methodology and Toolkit 2.0 for HE Impact Assessment

### The Methodology 2.0 for HE Impact Assessment

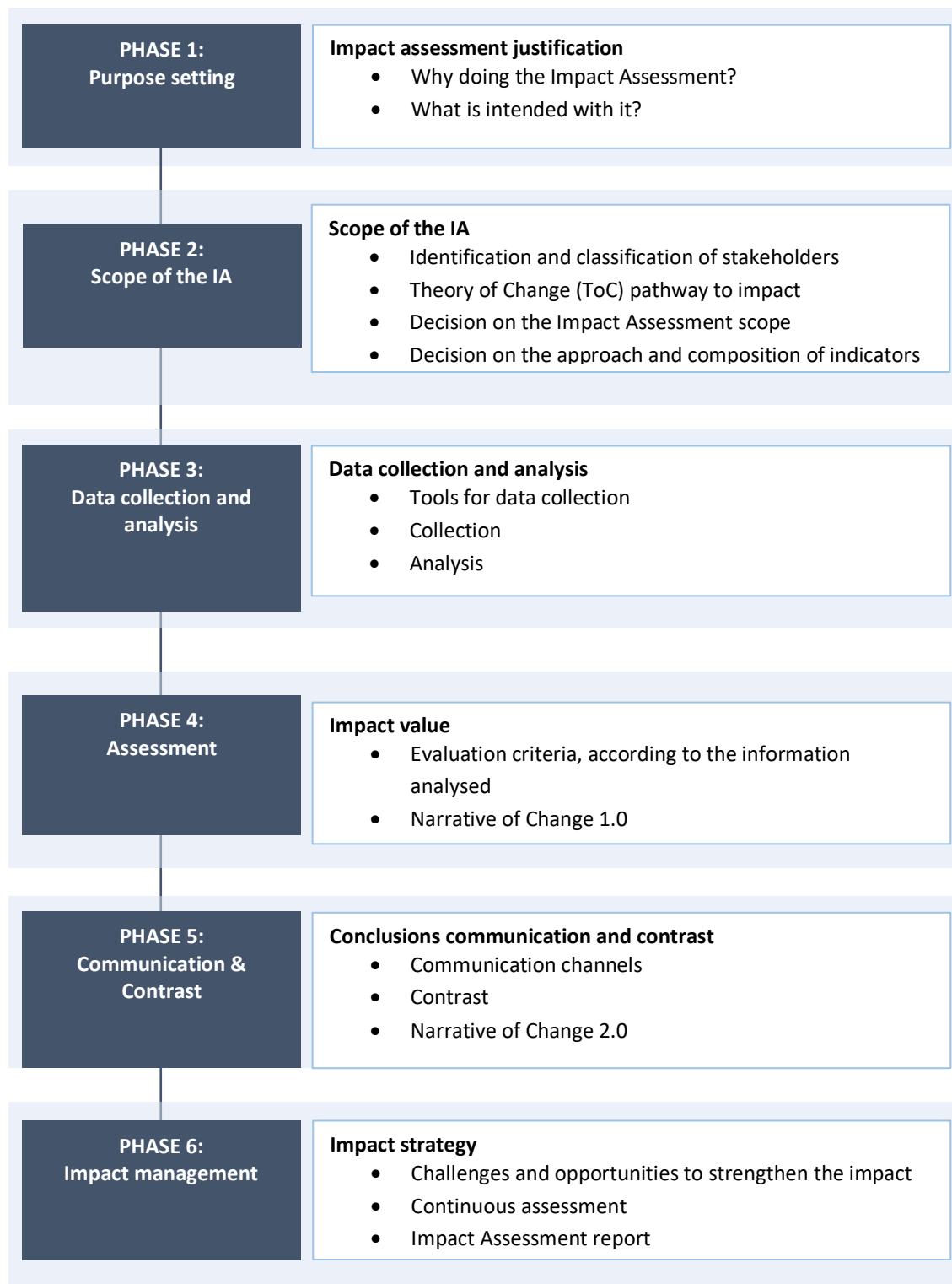
Building up on the first Methodology 1.0 for HE Impact Assessment, the Methodology 2.0 has been conceived as a **sequential process**, structured in 6 major phases which are highly **interrelated and retrofitting the next phases in a circular approach**. The diagram below illustrates the six different phases of the Methodology 2.0 for HE Impact Assessment.



**Figure 2.** Different phases of the Methodology 1.0 for HEI Impact Assessment.

Each of the 6 phases includes a set of specific actions and decisions to be taken in order to proceed to the next phase. The pilot case studies experience has shown that **impact assessment is not a uni-directional nor linear process**, since it is often necessary to go back to a previous phase and/or action in order to adjust the former conclusions to the new realities. Figure 3 details the different phases and the expected decisions to be taken in each.





**Figure 3.** Different phases of the Methodology 2.0 for HE Impact Assessment and expected actions/ decisions to be taken in each.



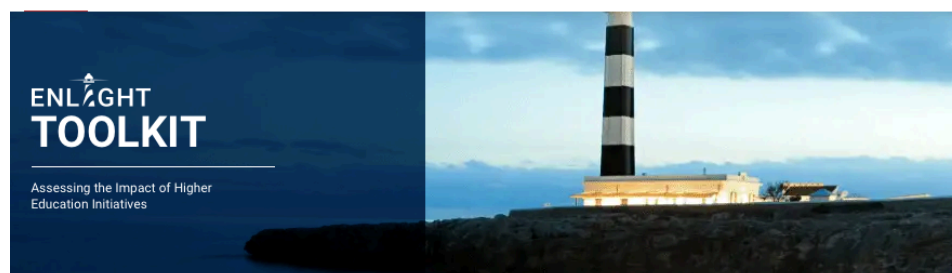
## The ENLIGHT Toolkit 2.0 for HE Impact Assessment

[The ENLIGHT Toolkit for Impact Assessment](#) has been designed following the sequential process of Methodology 2.0 (as presented above) and includes a set of specific tools that allow the impact assessment of Higher Education initiatives.

The Toolkit intends to accompany and guide users through the different phases of the impact assessment exercise, providing them with the supporting templates, the questions and clarifications necessary to run that exercise.

The Toolkit is free, confidential and open to anyone to use; although we expect the primary users to be mainly Impact Managers, Academics, Academic Support Staff and Members of Universities Management Teams.

In order to use the Toolkit, save and have later access to the provided information (accounting for the non-linearity of the process as stated before), users will be asked to sign-up to it with an individual profile account. The toolkit is designed such that users can run several impact assessment exercises for different action lines in parallel.



### INTRODUCTION

The ENLIGHT toolkit is a digital instrument to identify, analyse and assess the impact of Higher Education initiatives. The ENLIGHT toolkit brings together a set of specific tools that in a sequential process allow the assessment of Higher Education initiatives, in alignment with ENLIGHT methodology for impact assessment of Higher Education.

The objective is to accompany and guide users through the different phases of the impact assessment exercise, providing them with the supporting templates, the questions and clarifications necessary to run that exercise.

The ENLIGHT toolkit has been specially designed for assessing the impact of initiatives and/or activities developed in the context of Higher Education (e.g. education programmes, courses or modules, mobility actions, outreach related activities and/or research initiatives) but it can be used for other types of initiatives outside the academic context.

The toolkit is free, confidential and open to anyone to use; although we expect the primary users to be mainly Impact Managers, Academics, Academic Support Staff and Members of Universities Management Teams.

In order to use the toolkit, save and have later access to the provided information, you will be asked to sign-up to it with an individual profile account. You can run several impact assessment exercises for different action lines in parallel.

The toolkit guides your through the following interlinked sequential phases:



Read more about ENLIGHT and our Impact related work. [Here](#).

START HERE

**Figure 4.** ENLIGHT Toolkit 2.0 available at: <https://impact.enlight-eu.org/toolkit>

## Methodology and Toolkit 2.0 for HE Impact Assessment: Step by Step

The following sections present in a detailed way the different phases of the Methodology 2.0 for HE Impact Assessment and the expected actions/ decisions to be taken. For each phase, we introduce its specific objectives and provide a series of supporting tools and templates, which are integrated in the online [ENLIGHT Toolkit 2.0](#). Likewise, we also refer to the lessons learnt during the implementation of the pilot case studies, which may be of interest to future.

### Phase 1: Purpose Setting

The main objective of this phase is to **identify the initiative/ action line** under assessment, define the **reason why** to perform the impact assessment and for **what purpose**.

Identification of the initiative/ action line to be assessed	
Title of the initiative/ action line to be assessed	
Brief description of the initiative/ action line	
Purpose	
<b>Why the impact assessment of this Higher Education initiative/ action line is being proposed?</b> <b>What is intended with it? <u>For what purpose?</u></b>	

**Figure 5:** Template for identifying and describing the initiative/ action line under assessment, as well as the purpose of the impact assessment exercise.

Whether the request for impact assessment arises in response to an external demand or if it is raised by the leader of/ partners involved in the initiative/action line, there are a series of potential motivational elements that may lead the start of an impact assessment process. For example, the impact assessment exercise could be a response to a strategy of:

- *Benchmarking and competitiveness:* to compare and improve the image or reputation of an activity or entity in comparison to previous activity developments, competitors, etc.;
- *Legitimation:* to increase the positive image towards society and reduce the adverse perceptions;
- *Accountability and transparency:* to be accountable to certain interest groups, because they request it or because the entity considers it appropriate;
- *Understanding and adaptation:* to understand why, how and whether the initiative/ action line is bringing about the expected and desired impacts and steer change in strategies, priorities, activities, structures, etc.

### Lessons learnt

Pilot case studies exercise has demonstrated this first step as fundamental.

As regards the definition of the initiative/ action line, it is very important to have a **clear and shared understanding of what the action line is and is not about**. For example, the initial definition of ENLIGHT mobility action line had to be well-clarified and redefined (to also include the notions of online international learning experience, or mobilities funded by other non ENLIGHT project sources between project partners)<sup>4</sup>, so as to ensure a common understanding among all involved parties in the impact assessment exercise. All subsequent impact assessment phases are dependent on the concept of that action line.

Likewise, the **definition of the impact assessment purpose** is very important, since the scope and all subsequent phases of the impact assessment will vary depending on the objectives set for this exercise. For example, in the case of the ENLIGHT pilot case studies the main objective was to use them for building the present Methodology 2.0 and not to make a comparative, benchmarking analysis between action lines, work packages or universities.

## Phase 2: Scope Definition

The main objective of phase 2 is to **define the scope** of what is going to be assessed. For that purpose, there are several elements that need to be addressed, in most of the cases in a synchronous way:

- Definition of the impact pathway. Building-up the Theory of Change (ToC) causal chain of impact
- Identification and classification of stakeholders
- Decision on the Impact Assessment scope
- Decision on the approach and composition of indicators

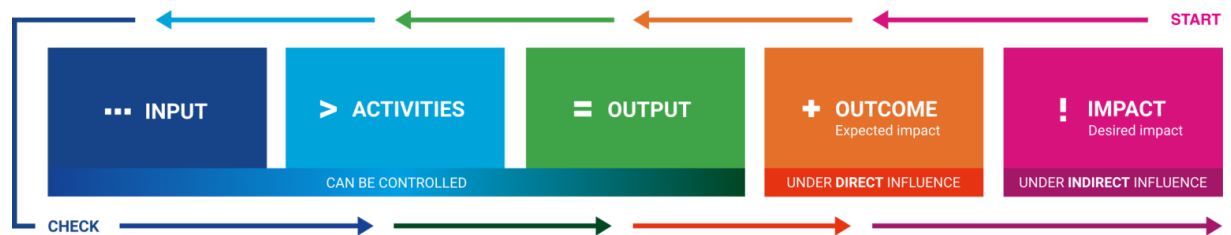
### **Definition of the Impact Pathway. Building-up the Theory of Change (ToC) Causal Chain of Impact**

*“The Theory of Change is essentially a comprehensive description and illustration of how and why a desired change is expected to happen in a particular context. It is focused in particular on mapping out or “filling in” what has been described as the “missing middle” between what a program or change initiative does (its activities or interventions) and how these lead to desired goals being achieved. It does this by first identifying the desired long-term goals and then works back from these to identify all the conditions (outcomes) that must be in place (and how these related to one another causally) for the goals to occur. These are all mapped out in an Outcomes Framework”<sup>5</sup>.*

In the causal chain of impact, it is proposed to describe the lines of activity that generate the impact, taking into consideration the resources to be used (inputs), the planned activities, the outputs delivered and the expected outcomes.

<sup>4</sup> By ENLIGHT mobility experience we understand all international learning experience at another ENLIGHT university of both students and staff (researchers, academics, and non academic staff). We take into consideration: online learning; virtual exchange (embedded in a physical course); blended learning; physical mobility, within ENLIGHT and funded by the budget of the Alliance or through other mobility schemes

<sup>5</sup> Source: <https://www.theoryofchange.org/what-is-theory-of-change/>



**Figure 6.** Causal chain of impact. Source: <https://www.erasmusplus.nl/en/impacttool-mobility>

- **Input** (what you need): all the resources necessary for the action line to be implemented;
- **Activities** (what you do): all the actions carried out by the project team during the action line period;
- **Outputs** (the product): the products which derive directly from the activities;
- **Outcomes** (expected): the results expected to be achieved from the activities and outputs. The expected outcomes are anticipated to contribute to the desired impact;
- **Impacts** (desired): the changes brought about as direct or indirect result from inputs/outputs/ outcomes.

As highlighted in figure 5, *input*, *activities* and *outputs* can be controlled and are mainly established by the action line owner; whilst *outcomes* and *impact* are (just) under influence (direct or indirect) of the action line owner and under the domain of stakeholders. That is the reason why outcomes and impact can be *intended* or *unintended*, *expected* or *unexpected*, by action line owners.

It is also important to take into consideration that the outcomes and impact can be:

- *Immediate or long-term*;
- *Small or big*;
- *Local or global*;
- *Instrumental* (direct change) *or conceptual* (ideas, feelings);
- *Tangible* (changes that are measurable and/or can be assessed) *or intangible* (changes that cannot be measured/ assessed).

There could also be *side impacts*, i.e. the changes incurred by the initiative/action line can also lead, in turn, to other effects, including on the specific action line.

When using the Theory of Change approach, the causal chain of impact should be:

- **Plausible**: evidence and common sense suggest that the activities will lead to the outputs and outcomes wished for;
- **Doable**: activities have adequate financial, technical and human resources;
- **Testable**: the pathways of change are specific and complete enough to track progress.

### Identification and Classification of Stakeholders

In the process of crafting the Theory of Change causal chain of impact, one should identify, classify and take into account those players that may be affected directly and indirectly by the action line. Stakeholders can be classified in function of the following criteria:

- *Influence*: the level of influence that stakeholders can exert on the action line (e.g., Work Package leaders and/or action leaders, or companies when dealing with university business cooperation activities);
- *Legitimacy*: the level of legitimacy of the stakeholders' demands regarding the desired impact (e.g., learners and academics involved in mobility actions);
- *Mismatch*: the level of discrepancy and divergence that is identified with respect to the values, norms and aspirations of the context where the activity is carried out, also considering the commitments acquired with the stakeholders (e.g., green mobility: increase the mobility and abroad experience, but at the same time promote sustainable patterns);
- *Dependency*: The level of dependency shown by stakeholders in relation to the action line, due to their limited power or influence (e.g. learners involved in the Challenge-based Learning pilot courses);
- *Urgency*: The level of urgency with which the action line must respond to the stakeholders, in relation to the demands, interest and expectations that they may have (e.g. establishing a digital, interconnected campus for the Alliance efficient management);
- *Vulnerability*: the level of risk or social vulnerability shown by the stakeholders regarding the potential impact (e.g. inclusive mobility).

In the case of the action lines selected by ENLIGHT pilot case studies the following main stakeholders have been identified:

- **Learners** (Bachelor, Master, Doctoral students, Lifelong learners);
- **Academics** (Teachers/ Lecturers / Researchers);
- **Education developers**;
- **Administrative and support staff**;
- **Universities management teams**;
- **Societal stakeholders**: business, research organisations, public authorities, civil society organisations, and society in general.

Depending on the initiative/action line the identified stakeholders could be categorised as:

- **Primary stakeholders**: those that are directly affected and/or related to the action line (e.g., the learners, academics and staff participating in the mobility action line);
- **Secondary stakeholders**: those that, although not having a direct relationship with the action line, may be affected by it (e.g., societal stakeholders affected by a potential increase of international mobility).

In the process of defining the scope of the impact assessment exercise and the causal chain of impact, experience has shown it is important to take into consideration **stakeholders' expectations**, being from those directly involved in the implementation of the action line (action leaders) or (directly/ indirectly) affected by it. For that exercise, there are multiple means and tools to be taken into consideration. In ENLIGHT pilot case studies, action leaders were consulted several times in the form of meetings and email exchanges, working on the basis of the Theory of Change causal chain of impact diagrams. Potentially affected stakeholders were consulted through

the launch of 4 online surveys<sup>6</sup>, consultations during 2 ENLIGHT Challenge-based Learning pilot courses<sup>7</sup>, and an Impact Workshop during the ENLIGHT European Dialogues event in Uppsala (11-12 May 2022). Depending on the context and consultation means, all identified stakeholders were consulted around the 3 following major questions:

1. *What is the dream?*

Which fundamental changes/transformations/impact would you like the initiative/action line to bring about in the future? For example, in the Higher Education context you can refer to the desired effects on learners, academics, support staff, the university, the education system.

2. *What are the expected achievements?*

Which short-term changes/ effects do you think the initiative/action line will actually have? It could be:

- on you
- on your university/ organisation
- on the community and/or /on the society

3. *What could be the evidence of these changes?*

What, in your view, would be evidence (qualitative or quantitative) that the envisaged changes have effectively been realised.

### Lessons learnt

*The crafting process of the theory of change causal chain of impact has demonstrated to be a **never-ending process** that can be continuously enriched, as both the action line and the impact assessment exercise evolves, and stakeholders' expectations are being integrated. For the final 3 selected action lines (Challenge-based Education (CBE), Mobility and Regional Academies), ENLIGHT Impact Task Force has crafted 5 versions of the theory of change diagrams:*

- 1) ToC 1.0 was built taking into consideration project proposal description;
- 2) ToC 2.0 was built taking into consideration action lines leaders' representatives first inputs;
- 3) ToC 3.0 was built taking into consideration action line leaders' comments;
- 4) ToC 4.0 breaks down expected outcomes and desired impact by type of consulted stakeholder;
- 5) ToC 5.0 merges all stakeholders' expectations and desired impacts into one single diagram, including action leaders' considerations based on the action line most recent developments. This was the version used for the elaboration of indicators (cfr. section 2.5).

*Pilot case studies exercise has demonstrated that the success of stakeholder consultations on expectations and desired impacts is highly dependent on the context and format of the actual consultation. Some degree of **familiarity with the action line** and a **favourable context** to answer the above questions is necessary (e.g. Impact workshop organised during the ENLIGHT European Dialogues event). For that purpose, the definition of the action line done in Phase 1 becomes relevant, as well as finding the good moment for carrying those consultations. Furthermore, experience has shown that responses to online surveys, with **free test responses**, are often limited in number, but very rich in content and new insights. Another major lesson learnt is that stakeholder consultations on the expected outcomes, desired impacts and related evidence contributed **to raise the overall impact awareness and literacy levels** of the involved communities, thus facilitating their involvement in future impact-related consultations.*

<sup>6</sup> ENLIGHT Impact Consultations on Doctoral Network; Flexible, Inclusive and Green Mobility; Teaching and Learning Lab; Peer Review Cycles – Diversity and Inclusion.

<sup>7</sup> [Climate Neutral City Mission BIP at Ghent University](#) (4-8 April 2022) & [AI Course at University of Tartu](#) (April 2022)



Important lessons have also been taken out during the **integration of stakeholders' expectations in the ToC causal chain of impact**, such as the following:

- Consulted stakeholders have identified expected outcomes and desired impacts **not initially considered** in the initial ToCs versions elaborated with action leaders. For example, students' consultation on CBE have identified as (new) expected outcomes "new approaches to teaching that respond to the needs of the labour market";
- Consulted stakeholders have also identified **unintended/ undesired outcomes** not initially contemplated. For example, administrative staff involved in the implementation of ENLIGHT mobility action line have identified as undesired outcome "more administrative hurdles for staff"; "more internal requests and bugs to deal with".
- Consulted stakeholders **do not identify all the outcomes/impacts of the first ToCs**, and clearly **downplay some and give more emphasis to others**. For instance, administrative staff responding to the consultation on ENLIGHT mobility action line have put lots of emphasis on the importance of increased, interconnected and flexible learning and mobility in comparison to inclusive mobility.
- Similarly, **action leaders also reduce the emphasis given by consulted stakeholders on identified outcomes/impacts**. For example, "better decision-making and more informed, engaged and committed communities" identified as expected outcomes of regional academies, were not considered as a major outcome of this action line by its leaders, at least in the short to medium term.
- The relevance of making a **clearer differentiation between outcomes** which are mainly associated with "attribution" ("we have achieved"), **and impact** which is mainly associated with "contribution" ("we have contributed to"). This distinction was made very clear with the "skills development" desired impact of the mobility action line, which was previously considered an outcome.

### Definition of the Impact Assessment Scope

Building-upon the elaborated theory of change impact pathway, one should define the scope of what actually is going (and can be) assessed. In order to determine it, it is suggested to answer the following guiding questions.

#### Impact assessment scope

- 1) **TIMING: When are the identified changes expected to be identifiable?**
  - Short term: changes are identifiable in a short period of time (1 - 3 years)
  - Medium term: changes are identifiable in a medium period of time (3 - 5 years)
  - Long term: changes are identifiable over a long period of time (5 years and up)
- 2) **GEOGRAPHICAL REACH: What is the geographical reach of the identified changes?**
  - In the community/region/country where the action line takes places
  - In the European context
  - In the Global context
- 3) **OBJECTIVES: what evidence do you want to capture?** This could be, but not limited to
  - Financial return of the impact (to the institution (e.g. University) or to the society)
  - Impact on the SDGs, EU policies, National/ Regional policies
  - Impact on society, economy, environment,...
  - Impact on ecosystems
  - Impact on higher education, research and technology systems
  - Impact on stakeholders



- Others...

#### 4) FOCUS: What are the outcomes/ impacts the impact assessment exercise wants to focus on?

**Figure 7.** Guiding questions for defining the impact assessment scope.

#### Lessons learnt

*In the case of the ENLIGHT Pilot Case Studies, impact has been assessed during the action line implementation (as they are major ongoing activities of the ENLIGHT alliance), they have a European reach, and the intention has been to capture the overall impact on:*

- **ENLIGHT Universities.** More specifically on ENLIGHT Learning Ecosystem and Competence Framework, involving its learners, academics and support staff.
- **ENLIGHT Local and Transnational Socio-Economic Environments.** More specifically on ENLIGHT multi-scale networks for education, research and transfer for and with society;
- **The European Higher Education Area and European Research Area.** More specifically, on building the ENLIGHT European University System.

#### Decision on the Approach and Composition of Indicators

After delimiting the scope of the impact assessment exercise, the objective is to define the approach to be used to capture evidence of impact leading to a list of indicators (both quantitative and qualitative). The table below shows the 3 main approaches that could be adopted for capturing evidence of impact.

#### Approach

Experimental approaches (Experimental and Quasi-Experimental approaches)	Non-experimental approach	Mixed approach
<p>The experimental approaches focus on <b>identifying the change that is exclusively attributable to the activity</b>.</p> <p>Based on the application of controlled experimental methods, the change produced in the target group is compared with a population that has not been affected by it (<b>the control group</b>).</p> <p>This comparison is established based on quantitative variables that have been previously selected because it</p>	<p>The non-experimental approach focuses on the <b>description of the causal relationships between and activity and its impact</b>.</p> <p>The evaluation is based on <b>participatory approaches that combine quantitative and qualitative techniques</b> (perception surveys, focus groups, interviews...).</p> <p>Through these approaches, one seeks to verify or refute the hypotheses about the desired impact, from the analysis of the narratives of those affected by the impact.</p>	<p>The mixed approach is applied by combining the experimental with the non-experimental approaches. It seeks to determine the attribution of the activity to the impact generated from the experimental approach, and the experience perceived by those affected by impact applying the non-experimental approach.</p>

is verified that the activity is going to affect them. A statistical analysis is carried out, according to the fixed variables, to identify the changes produced in the target group, based on the differences that they present with respect to the selected control group.	In contrast to the experimental approach, this approach does not seek to determine the impact attributable to the activity, but rather focuses on highlighting the contributions of the activity, according to the experience of the participants or those affected by the impact.	
<b>Use of methods for setting cohorts, identify the treatment group and design control groups</b>	<b>Use of methods for collecting information based on the experience of those affected by the impact (desired/ created)</b>	<b>The mixed approach is applied using experimental and non-experimental methods</b>

**Figure 8.** Different approaches for the composition of indicators.

### **Lessons learnt**

*The initial intention with the ENLIGHT Pilot Case Studies was to adopt a mixed approach, combining an experimental with a non-experimental approach. However, due to the difficulties in setting-up control groups respecting the exact same characteristics of the target groups, the ENLIGHT Impact Task Force has decided to **use a non-experimental approach**, combining quantitative and qualitative techniques (surveys and statistical data).*

### **Selection and composition of indicators**

As part of the process of selecting and defining indicators (quantitative, quantifiable and/or qualitative) it is recommended to review existing research and studies that have already been carried out on similar types of impact. These sources can be used to identify impact indicators, or even counterfactuals, to be extrapolated to the specific impact assessment exercise.

In addition, in this process of selecting and defining indicators, one could take into consideration indicators from 4 different sources:

1. *From the organisation perspective:* the organisation's goals and own indicators could be used as a key reference in order to assess the expected outcomes and desired impact.
2. *From the action line perspective:* impact indicators could also be linked to, and extracted from, each action line own specific performance-related indicators.
3. *From the stakeholders' perspective:* stakeholders should also be consulted on their views regarding the evidence necessary to capture the expected outcomes and desired impact.
4. *From the societal perspective:* indicators reflecting the contributions to solving great societal challenges, being at the community, local, regional, country, European or global levels. The Sustainable Development Impact indicators are a good example of how integrating the societal perspective in indicators definition and composition.

### **Lessons learnt**

The composition of indicators for ENLIGHT pilot case studies was made taking as reference the expected outcomes and the desired impact of the theory of chain causal chain of impact (ToC) and the agreed impact assessment scope. On this basis, the ENLIGHT impact task force has used the relevant:

- **ENLIGHT project own indicators** (“(1) organisation indicators”);
- **ENLIGHT universities data** (“(1) organisation indicators”);
- **Action line specific (performance) indicators** ((2) Work Packages related indicators);
- **Stakeholders’ suggestions for evidence** (3).

In addition, the task force has also proposed new indicators, which are mainly built upon project indicators or captured via surveys or focus groups. As a result there were about 40 to 65 indicators defined for each action line. In this process, important lessons have been drawn:

- **A few number of indicators could be repeated for different outcomes and are of relevance for different case studies;**
- **Even if, at a first glance, some indicators could look like as output/ performance indicators (e.g., N° & % of academic, business, policy making and civil society organisations participating in the different Regional Academies and related initiatives), it all depends on the interpretation/ narrative associated with that indicator, as they can “indicate” a change in a certain direction.**
- **It is important to contrast this “ideal indicators dashboard” with the leaders of the relevant action lines to check:**
  - o **On indicators relevance.** Are the proposed indicators capturing well the expected/ desired changes? Are any others that should be taken into account? As part of this process, and upon suggestion of action leaders, a few number of new indicators were added or adjusted when preparing the ENLIGHT impact survey, for instance.
  - o **On the viability of collecting data for the identified indicators.** At this respect, it was made clear that despite their relevance, **there are indicators that cannot be used in the short-time as some of the activities are still ongoing and/ or the expected changes can only be observed in the medium to long-term, beyond the duration of the pilot case study.** For those cases, it was decided to maintain the identified indicators for future impact assessment exercises.
- **In the specific case of the ENLIGHT Mobility action line, it was possible to identify indicators allowing the contrast between the effects of this action line and the effects of other (non-ENLIGHT) mobility actions.** However, the establishment of contrast groups, which should have the same characteristics as the ENLIGHT Mobility control group, was not possible during the project-lifetime.

### Phase 3: Data Collection and Analysis

The main objective of this phase is to collect all quantitative and qualitative-related data and testimonials responding to the identified indicators of change and impact, as well as to analyse the results of this data collection exercise.

For the data collection exercise, the methods and means to be used depend very much on the adopted approach and the indicators that were previously selected (cfr. section 2.5).

The table below could be used as reference for displaying all collected quantitative and qualitative data responding to the identified indicators of change and impact, as well as for narrating the observed changes.

▼ Desired impact  
**DESIRED IMPACT 1**

Expected outcome	Affected stakeholder	INDICATOR	INDICATOR RESULTS
	Academics (e.g. teachers,	Indicator	
Expected outcome	Affected stakeholder	INDICATOR	INDICATOR RESULTS
Expected outcome	Affected stakeholder	INDICATOR	INDICATOR RESULTS

**Figure 9.** Data Collection table. ENLIGHT Toolkit for Impact Assessment.

### Lessons Learnt

- Besides the data that has been captured for the identified indicators through the convened means, the ENLIGHT Impact Team has also realised that there were **other sources of data that could be relevant and of use for the impact assessment exercise**. This has been particularly evident for the Challenge-based Education pilot case study. In parallel to the impact assessment exercise, the leaders of this action line were conducting a study aiming to identify lessons learnt and develop recommendations for future CBE pilot courses iterations and new pilots (Deliverable 25: Guidelines for transfer of practices to other ENLIGHT context). The ENLIGHT Impact Team was represented in some interviews with relevant stakeholders to capture important conclusions and testimonials for its own impact assessment exercise.
- As regards project partners related data, as well as indicators build-upon project indicators, **it was often difficult to capture detailed and broken-down data as desired**. This is because the collection process was not designed specifically to capture that broken-down data but just aggregated figures. For example, for indicator 6.1.1 a) N° & % of learners, academics, support staff, societal stakeholders' representatives participating in the different Regional Academies and related initiatives, we could not obtain the detailed broken-down figures.
- The collection of all data by the deadline that was set by the ENLIGHT Impact Team (15 July 2023) before the activities/ project termination (31 October 2023) didn't allow to capture the full effects these activities were having on stakeholders. This is particularly evident in the case of the ENLIGHT Challenge-based Education action line, where pilot courses were still running during the summer period. Likewise, data for the mobilities taking place during the academic year 2022-2023 were not available for many partner universities in July 2023. The alignment between project reporting for the European Commission and data collection and analysis' exercises is recommended for future impact assessments.
- The analysis of the ENLIGHT Impact Survey results have also demonstrated **the importance of clarifying very well ENLIGHT jargon, key concepts and objectives to the survey target groups**. Despite having presented this in the survey introduction and at the beginning of each questionnaire section, it was observed that there were responders answering the Regional Academies' related questions that considered it as a Challenge-based Education pilot course; or responders answering the Challenge-based Education questions after their participation in an ENLIGHT RISE webinar.

### Phase 4: Assessment

The objective of this phase is to assess the observed changes and impacts, following the results obtained via the compilation and analysis of data/information.

For facilitating this assessment it is suggested to make first a categorisation of the different types of impact. Figure 10 provides an overview of the different categories of impact.

Impact Categories	Types of Impact by Category
Depending on the <b>temporality</b> of the impact generated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Primary:</b> if it has an immediate incidence on the stakeholders.</li> <li>- <b>Cumulative:</b> if the action that causes the impact is prolonged in time and, if not being managed, its effects are increased or even extended to the different areas where it was first having incidence.</li> <li>- <b>Synergic:</b> if it is related to the set of impacts that simultaneously affect several stakeholders or areas, causing an impact greater than the sum effect that the separate impacts would cause.</li> <li>- <b>Temporary:</b> if it occurs intermittently, continuously but only during the course of the action, or if it is possible to determine its conclusion.</li> <li>- <b>Permanent:</b> if it remains stable over time even after the action that led to it has ended, or if it occurs intermittently, but without being possible to define its end.</li> </ul>
Depending on the <b>intention</b> of the action that led to the impact generated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Direct impact:</b> if it occurs through a direct interaction between the action line and the transformation observed, and that occurs as result of the intention that the organisation had when it was proposed to carry out the specific action.</li> <li>- <b>Indirect impact:</b> if it is not a direct result of the activity, but a result derived from it which, although it may not have been contemplated by the organisation, it is also attributable to it.</li> </ul>
Depending on the possibility, difficulty or impossibility with which the impact can be <b>repaired</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Reversible:</b> if the original conditions in which the transformation took place can reappear and/or if, through impact management, alternative conditions can be offered to the transformation caused by the impact generated.</li> <li>- <b>Irreversible:</b> if through impact management it is not possible to recover the original context conditions where the transformation took place and/or if the contributions or the damages/grievances caused are irreparable.</li> </ul>
Depending on the <b>intensity</b> with which the impact has affected those concerned by it	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Null:</b> when there is not enough evidence to demonstrate the change that the implementation of the activity has brought about (it is estimated that the change is recognised by between 0 to 5% of those affected by the impact);</li> <li>- <b>Minor:</b> when there is little evidence to demonstrate the change that the implementation of the activity has brought about (it is estimated</li> </ul>

	<p>that the change is recognised by between 5% to 40% of those affected by the impact);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Moderate:</b> when there is sufficient evidence to demonstrate the change that the implementation of the activity has brought about (it is estimated that the change is recognised by between 40% to 75% of those concerned by the impact);</li> <li>- <b>Significant:</b> when there is abundant evidence to demonstrate the change that has led to the implementation of the activity (it is estimated that the change is recognised by between 75% to 100% of those concerned by the impact).</li> </ul>
Depending on the <b>extent</b> of the impact on the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Punctual:</b> when the area affected by the impact can be delimited in a specific geographical space or in a specific dimension of the environment to which the organisation belongs;</li> <li>- <b>Partial:</b> when the area affected by the impact is delimited in several geographical spaces or dimensions of the environment to which the organisation is linked to;</li> <li>- <b>Extensive:</b> when the area affected by the impact cannot be delimited in a specific geographical space or dimension of the environment and, therefore, it is not possible to define the limits (local, regional, european/ international) of the areas and dimensions affected by the impact.</li> </ul>

**Figure 10.** Overview of the different categories of impact.

An “impact map” could be also designed in order to illustrate and visualise:

- the different areas affected by the action line (*impact areas*);
- the observed changes and impacts taking in consideration those stakeholders affected by the impact generated (*changes and impacts by stakeholder*);
- the categorisation of the observed changes and impacts;
- the existing relationships between the impact areas, the observed changes and impact, and the categorisation of these (*impact interdependencies*).

In this phase it is also important to bear in mind that any quantitative or qualitative impact assessment exercise implies a value judgment, considering what is seen as positive and negative, what is important and what is not. The value attributed to the impact will have a greater significance if those assessments are contrasted and dialogued with the main stakeholders throughout the whole process (see next section: Phase 5 Communication and Contrast).

For reference, one can consider as *positive impacts* those impacts where there is evidence that:



- The impact has an intention of universality: it would be valid for all those who were affected by the impact, because it responds to universal norms and because it would be acceptable, recognisable and not punishable in the context where it took place;
- The established analysis shows that, based on a rational calculation of the consequences, the impact manages to favor the well-being of the greatest number of those affected by it;
- The impact allows the organisation to advance in the fulfillment of its purpose and, in turn, responds to the society expectations and aspirations.

As *negative impacts*, one can consider those impacts where there is evidence that:

- The impact contributes to deteriorating the living conditions of those affected by it;
- The impact is contrary to the mission of the organisation that generates it;
- The impact goes against the values, norms and aspirations on which the society is based to ensure its well-being.

On the one hand, the accumulation of considered *negative impacts* will serve to identify the adverse effects for which the organisation should take responsibility for, in order to mitigate these and thus ensure a more positive impact. On the other hand, the accumulation of considered *positive impacts* will allow to identify the positive effects of the organisation's activity, which should continue being promoted in order to fulfil its mission in society.

In addition, one can also distinguish between the *intended impacts* from those that were *unintended*, or those *expected* from those that were *unexpected*, taking as reference the ToC defined in the context of phase 2: Scope Definition.

The conclusions of this analysis, reflected in the **Narrative of Change 1.0**, will then be contrasted in the subsequent phase with the relevant stakeholders (Phase 5: Communication and Contrast) and constitute the basis for the future Impact Management phase (Phase 6).

#### Lessons Learnt

- For simplification purposes, **the impact assessment of the observed outcomes was done taking as reference the general outcomes as a whole; knowing that each observed outcome is made of multiple observed changes/effects**. A more exhaustive assessment would require looking at each specific observed change within each outcome.
- The assessment of the observed outcomes against the above-mentioned criteria has shown that in some cases an **observed outcome can simultaneously adopt different characteristics under the same criteria**. For example, in the case of outcome 2.1 (Challenge-based education is introduced in ENLIGHT educational offer) and as regards the temporality criterion, the effects are "primary" (since they have an immediate incidence on stakeholders), "cumulative" (effects can be increased/extended to different areas, if the action is continued on time), "synergic" (effects are greater than the separate effect of the action), and "permanent" (effects remain after the end of the project).
- As regards the intention criterion, it was also noted that the **observed impact can be direct, as there is a direct interaction between the action line and the transformation observer, but at the same unintentional**. This was made evident with the ENLIGHT Mobility action line outcome 5.6 (more administrative hurdles for staff).



## Phase 5: Communication and Contrast

This phase consists of reporting, communicating, disseminating as well as contrasting on the results of the assessment phase. For this purpose, one should determine:

- **TO WHOM** is the communication targeted at? (e.g., action leaders, organisation management team, affected stakeholders, the society in general?)
- **WHAT** is going to be communicated about the impact assessment (results obtained, positive and/or negative impacts, challenges identified...)? Which messages/ questions should be communicated/ asked?
- **HOW** to communicate/ contrast them (working meetings, reports, conferences, congresses...)?

This phase should allow to:

- **Carry out a contrast to refute or validate**, ideally together with the stakeholders, the initial assumptions that were established about the expected and desired impact, what changes have been identified and what is the relationship between these impacts with the purpose that inspire the organisation's actions;
- **Promote stakeholders' participation in and ownership of the impact exercise**, establishing with them a series of common objectives in order to ensure that their demands and interests are taken into consideration for the management of the observed impacts;
- **Strengthen the link and establish stable communication channels with stakeholders** in order to generate a shared understanding of the observed impacts;
- **Identify possible impact dimensions that have not been considered in the impact assessment**, which should be included in future exercises and in the impact management phase;
- **Develop a series of new potential indicators**, together with stakeholders, which may be used for future impact assessment exercises;
- **Raise impact literacy and proficiency and delve into the study of impact assessment**, showing the positive elements, the challenges and difficulties felt during the impact assessment process, introducing improvements and/or extrapolating the used assessment forms to other action lines of the organisation;
- **Strengthen the link with other entities**, exploring the possibility of linking the identified changes with those generated by other organisations with the view to establish a shared management and take co-responsibility for the wider systemic and societal impacts.

### Lessons Learnt

- *The Narrative of Change 1.0 for the three pilot case studies was **contrasted with the respective Action Leaders on the accuracy of data analysis and impact assessment**. It was also communicated to ENLIGHT Board of Directors. The communication and contrast with the affected stakeholders is planned to take place after the project conclusion and should be the basis for generating the Narrative of Change 2.0. Likewise, it would be used for the subsequent "impact management" phase, which coincides with the launch of the new ENLIGHT 2.0 activities.*

- Similarly, the Narrative of Change 1.0 will be also communicated and contrasted with other European University Alliances in the context of the FOREU2 impact thematic group, which is led by ENLIGHT. This is a clear example of how this phase could help strengthen the link between ENLIGHT and other University Alliances in their co-shared responsibility of bringing about impact in the European Higher Education Area.
- Besides, the Narrative 1.0 has been used as basis for completing the ENLIGHT contribution to the European Commission's Monitoring Framework for the European Universities initiative.

## Phase 6: Impact Management

This phase consists in defining the strategies to be implemented in order to manage the identified changes, seeking to correct/minimise those effects that are considered as *negative* and enhancing/maximising those that have been identified as *positive*.

In this context, it is important the organisation develops its own approach regarding the identification and management of the outcomes/impact generated, and that this approach permeates its own organisational *strategy* and *culture*.

As part of this process, the key issues and conclusions identified by stakeholders on the desired/generated impact and decisions agreed upon in the previous phase should be taken into consideration.

In addition, the strategy for impact management should make visible and seek reparation for those dimensions or stakeholders that have been negatively affected; also considering those stakeholders that could not be contemplated in the impact assessment exercise. This process will also help the organisation discover new contexts in which it can maximise its impacts.

As reference, below there is a series of potential impact management actions:

- Generate **mechanisms and tools** to institutionalise the lessons learned from the impact assessment exercise (policies, recognition systems, training and staff reflection dynamics...), in such a way that an assessment, monitoring and management system can be designed and used to report on the impact generated in alignment with the purpose of the activity/organisation (defined in phase 1);
- Establish the **normative and legal** limits that considered *negative impacts* should not transgress, also in accordance with the commitments taken with the stakeholders and society;
- Develop **objectives and indicators** which will serve to integrate the stakeholders' demands and interests in the strategy deployment of the organisation or in new cycles of the action lines considered;
- Establish **channels and mechanisms of communication** with the different stakeholders to show the progress in outcomes and to collect the improvement suggestions that these groups propose;
- Promote a culture of **awareness and responsibility**, ensuring permanent communication channels and the establishment of synergies between the members of the organisation in the identification and management of the effects that are produced in the causal chain of impact;

- Ensure the **commitment** of the management teams, as well as of the funders and other interest groups to actively participate in the generation of mechanisms, communication and contrast spaces, and resources and means, that allow establishing the registration, monitoring and the constant management of the effects, both positive and adverse, that are generated in the repair or enhancement of the evaluated impact.

The conclusions of this phase and the results of the full impact assessment cycle could then serve to feed into a new impact assessment exercise and, more specifically, Phase 1: Purpose Setting, in a circular process.

## Conclusions and Next Steps

The refined and simplified version 2.0 of the Methodology for the Impact Assessment of Higher Education initiatives and the related online ENLIGHT toolkit **has proven to be a useful means for assessing the impact of different types of ENLIGHT Higher Education activities**. Through the three pilot case studies (on Challenge-based Education, Mobility and Regional Academies)<sup>8</sup>, Methodology 2.0 has demonstrated being of value in phases 1 (purpose setting), 2 (scope definition), 3 (data collection & analysis), 4 (assessment), and partially 5 (communication and contrast). To complete the full cycle, the three Narratives 1.0 need to be further communicated and contrasted with other relevant stakeholders besides the action leaders, such as learners, academics, support staff and societal stakeholders. **The resulting Narrative of Change 2.0 should then constitute the basis for the subsequent Impact Management phase (phase 6)**. This is a crucial phase that is well aligned and coincides with the launch of the new ENLIGHT 2.0 activities, including the new impact-related task (6.1). In the framework of this new task, the ENLIGHT Impact Task Force is expected to further upgrade its methodological framework, to “calibrate” it with other University Alliances and produce biennial impact reports combining “narratives of change” with contrasted indicators and testimonial of the different target groups. The results and lessons learnt of the ENLIGHT Impact Task force first years’ work are the foundations for this and will feed into the future ENLIGHT 2.0 impact task.

Reflecting Methodology 2.0 and the experience of the pilot case studies, the **Toolkit for the Impact Assessment of Higher Education initiatives** (<https://impact.enlight-eu.org/toolkit>) **needs to be further tested on both its usability by other players not members of the ENLIGHT Impact Task Force, and applicability to other Higher Education activities**, within and beyond the ENLIGHT and its partner universities.

This deliverable document combines the methodological approach with the lessons learnt of the realization of the pilot case studies above mentioned and the online free Toolkit. We trust this **theoretical-practical approach is of value for other European universities and University Alliances, and at the same time can be further enriched with their experiences**. For that purpose, ENLIGHT is leading the FOREU2 Impact Thematic Group, will organize biennial International Impact Conferences with internationally-renowned impact experts and is participating in multiple international fora around the theme of impact (e.g., II Forum of European University Alliances, AESIS and UIIN conferences).

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<sup>8</sup> Cfr. Deliverable 115 for further details.

## Annex 1 State of the art on impact assessment

Impact assessment is a practice that is growing in importance and relevance worldwide. More and more organisations are analysing their impact(s) with the objective of getting evidence, understanding and demonstrating the value of their contributions to society. This movement is accompanied by an increase in the number of methodological approaches and tools developed to assess the impact of organisations.

In their research, authors such as Clifford (2014) or Vanclay, et. al. (2015) provide an overview of the wide spectrum of terminologies, tools, proposals and, also, debates that are ongoing in this field of study. If, on the one hand, this wide variety of terminologies, tools and proposals contribute to expand the range of available options to analyse the performance/ impact of an organisation, on the other hand, it makes very difficult to combine the different theoretical positions and practical proposals to develop impact assessment approaches that are useful and can be easily extrapolated to different types of organisations.

This is the reason why Nicholls, et. al. (2012) point out that the study of impact assessment should go deeper in order to bring closer the different theoretical positions with the practical proposals for impact assessment. The objective is to identify a set of generic and commonly shared references and to provide guidance on the establishment of indicators and on the criteria used to make impact assessment.

In line with this objective, the following challenges should be tackled<sup>9</sup>:

- To promote different practices that break with the existing trend of quantifying outputs, outcomes and impact. In this sense, the need to develop approaches that allow capturing the experience of those affected by the impact is underlined.
- The need of including a multidisciplinary perspective in impact assessment in order to overcome the econometric perspective that prevails in this area.
- To promote the idea that impact assessment not only serve as a benchmark or accountability exercise, but also as an exercise for understanding how to improve the identified impact. Evidence shows that the majority of the existing models still do not provide clear references on how to include impact management in the organisation's strategy.
- The importance of not ignoring the complexity involved in the analysis of the impact phenomenon. There is a tendency to limit the impact into a specific (manageable) timeframe, to intuitively assign a quantitative value to an unquantifiable variable, to design samples that are comparable but that sometimes do not faithfully represent who is or is not affected by the impacts, or to put an excessive emphasis on the activity performance, but neglecting the identification of the external changes (social, economic, environmental...) that it is generating. This makes the impact analysis more manageable, but it also generates certain biases in the

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<sup>9</sup> The exposed challenges are raised following the investigations of authors such as Maas & Liket (2011), Nicholls, et. al. (2012), Reeder & Coolantonio (2013), Clifford (2014), Vanclay, et. al. (2015), Casado, et. al. (2017), García (2017); Bouri, et. al. (2018), Kvam (2018) and Klaiber, et. al. (2019).

assessment and leads the organisation to erroneously interpret (by excess or by default) the impact that it is generating with its activity.

- To promote transparency in impact assessment reports. In this area, the lack of transparency and opacity present in the impact assessment reports is evident. On many occasions, the criteria that have been considered to attribute a certain value to the different elements of the analysis are not stated. In this sense, there is a perceived need for explaining in a more transparent manner what is the specific process that has been carried out, what have been the difficulties and based on what foundations the impact assessment has been established. This will make it possible to identify the main strengths and weaknesses of these reviews, and help promoting better ways of assessing impact.
- To deepen the theoretical and practical study in the field of impact assessment. In this field, there is an evident lack of consensus on the terminology to be used and the ways of proceeding in the assessment. In the literature review, it is verified that there is a multiplicity of terminologies to interpret the impact phenomenon and proposals to evaluate it, which makes it difficult both at a theoretical level and in practice to have precise and generalized (or generalizable) references on how it should be analysed.

When applied in the Higher Education context, impact assessment has been mainly associated with the impact of the scientific and research activity or with quality assurance, which is directed to ensure the efficiency of the process and the effectiveness in the delivery of the results.

In the case of research impact, the recently approved Pact for Research and Innovation in Europe (November 2021)<sup>10</sup>, recognizes “value creation and societal and economic impact” as a major value and principle for EU research and innovation. Impact (scientific, societal and economic) is also a key element of the evaluation of Horizon Europe project proposals<sup>11</sup>. In parallel, research councils are increasingly asking candidates to go further than promising impact for new project initiatives, by planning activities involving stakeholders and providing proof of impact. There are worldwide good practices and reports, mainly carried out by national research councils, funding agencies and science policymakers, such as the Research Excellence Framework (REF) in the UK, Research Impact Canada, National Alliance for Broader Impacts (NABI) in USA, Engagement and Impact Assessment Australia, etc.

However, the impact assessment (both methodology and implementation) of universities in relation to their comprehensive mission (education, research, innovation and service to society) is still in its infancy (see for example: JRC science and policy report on “a regional innovation impact assessment framework for universities”, 2018). It requires a systemic approach as part of a long-term endeavor.

<sup>10</sup> [https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-13701-2021-INIT/en/pdf?utm\\_source=flexmail&utm\\_medium=e-mail&utm\\_campaign=euapresidentsnewsletterdecember20211998euapresidentsnewslette20211215t07543&utm\\_content=pact+for+research](https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-13701-2021-INIT/en/pdf?utm_source=flexmail&utm_medium=e-mail&utm_campaign=euapresidentsnewsletterdecember20211998euapresidentsnewslette20211215t07543&utm_content=pact+for+research)

<sup>11</sup> <https://op.europa.eu/es/publication-detail/-/publication/cbb7ce39-d66d-11e8-9424-01aa75ed71a1>



Against this backdrop, it is proposed to adopt a flexible impact assessment methodology that can be adapted to any type of organization, including Higher Education Institutions in their full education, research and service to society mission.

In order to propose this methodological approach, a bibliographical study has been previously carried out on the main research in the field of impact assessment. This review has focused on three main areas:

1. Impact assessment processes;
2. The strengths and weaknesses of impact assessment approaches and tools; and
3. The organizations' challenges in the management of social impact.

The main sources consulted in each of these three areas are listed below:

#### List of sources focused on impact assessment processes

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