



Discover HEInnovate: Transforming Higher Education Institutions Webinar

Summary Note



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European
Commission



Contents

Summary of the HEInnovate Information Session	3
Introduction.....	3
Presentation from the HEInnovate Team	3
Institutional Transformation with HEInnovate at the University of Technology Sydney (UTS)	6
Q&A and Closing Remarks	8
Conclusion.....	8

Summary of the HEInnovate Information Session

Date: 9 October 2025

Time: 15:00–16:00 CET

Location: Online (MS Teams)

Speakers:

- **Loredana Lombardi** – Policy Officer, European Commission’s Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC, Unit C.1 – Innovation and EIT)
- **Jonathan Potter** – Head of Entrepreneurship Policy Unit, Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities, OECD
- **Flávia Colus** – Senior Researcher, PPMI (Part of Verian Group), HEInnovate Team
- **Martin Bliemel** – Director of Innovation, Transdisciplinary School, University of Technology Sydney (UTS).

Introduction

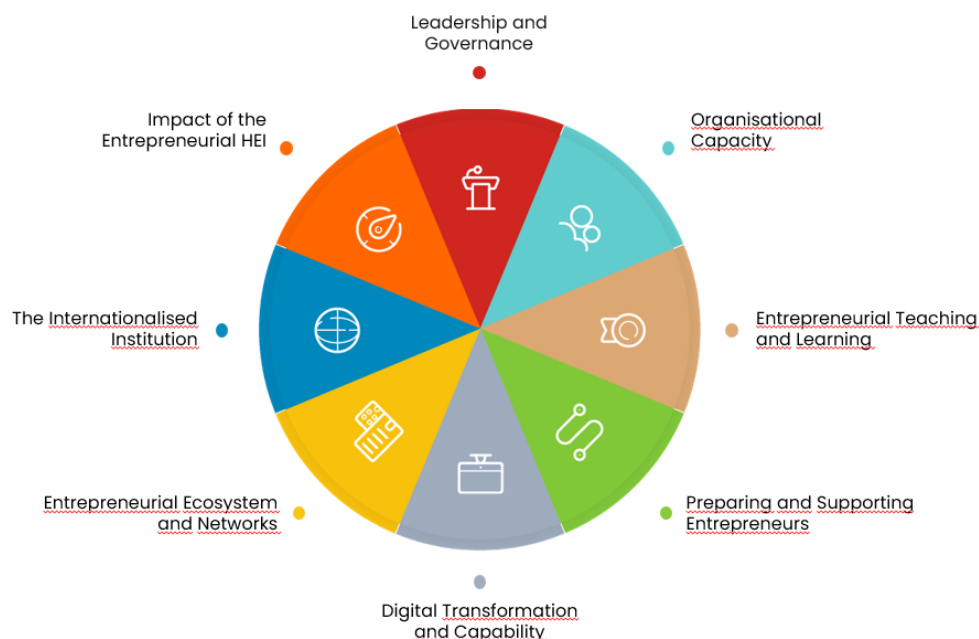
The webinar opened with introductory remarks from representatives of the European Commission and the OECD, who provided important political and strategic context for the HEInnovate initiative. Loredana Lombardi from the Commission’s Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC) explained that HEInnovate is a joint initiative with OECD that aims to bring together higher education and innovation experts. She emphasised the growing importance of entrepreneurship, digital transformation and innovation in the EU’s education agenda and new political vision, and how HEInnovate fits within broader strategic priorities, such as the Union of Skills & the priority to support Start-up and Scale-ups. She also highlighted key figures, such as the fact that, since its inception in 2013, the tool has been used by over 34,000 individuals.

Jonathan Potter from the OECD explained the tool’s purpose and conceptual basis. He noted that HEInnovate is grounded in years of joint OECD–EU research on best practices in higher education. The tool helps institutional leaders and policymakers enhance their universities’ entrepreneurial capacity by promoting innovation, student initiative, and knowledge exchange. Potter emphasised that its impact is greatest when accompanied by committed leadership, supportive institutional incentives, and local champions who can transform ideas into concrete actions.

Presentation from the HEInnovate Team

Flávia Colus from PPMI gave an in-depth introduction to HEInnovate’s structure and use. HEInnovate enables higher education institutions (HEIs) to reflect on their entrepreneurial and innovative capacity across eight dimensions:

FIGURE 1. THE 8 DIMENSIONS OF HEINNOVATE



Flávia shared with all participants HEInnovate's user journey, which is composed of 5 steps:

- **Step 0: Orientation.** Users should take some time **exploring the tool**, understanding what it offers, how the self-assessment works, and what kinds of resources are available.
- **Step 1: Reflect.** Users are invited to **complete the HEInnovate self-assessment**. This involves reflecting on eight key dimensions of innovation and entrepreneurship in higher education. The process can be done individually, but group assessments are recommended to encourage dialogue and reveal hidden strengths or knowledge gaps across the institution. Flávia stressed the ease of the collective process through the platform, in which users can create a group and share a link for their HEI's members to participate. The results will provide a clear, evidence-based overview of their institution's strengths and areas for improvement.
- **Step 2: Engage.** Once they have the results, users are encouraged to **organise a workshop or discussion** with leadership, staff, students, and other stakeholders. In it, they will have the opportunity to share the self-assessment outcomes and discuss

FIGURE 2. HEINNOVATE'S USER JOURNEY



the results, creating a common language for discussing innovation and entrepreneurship within their institutions.

- **Step 3: Plan.** Based on the previous steps, users can start preparing a **concrete action plan** for their HEI. They can identify which dimensions of innovation and entrepreneurship need the most attention and use HEInnovate's resources as practical guides for designing actions and shaping interventions. At this stage, it is particularly relevant to define clear goals and indicators to track progress over time, assign responsibilities, and engage both leadership and staff to ensure momentum and accountability. Flávia presented the Action Cards and the Action Planning templates to all participants, both of which are available at the website for free access.

FIGURE 3. EXAMPLE OF AN HEINNOVATE ACTION CARD

Leadership and Governance Advanced

Entrepreneurship Board or Council

Regular checks by external stakeholders and experts can provide necessary feedback to craft a realistic yet ambitious entrepreneurship strategy for your HEI. An entrepreneurship board or council can provide non-binding strategic advice to your HEI, interest group or department.

An internal entrepreneurship board could comprise relevant stakeholders, such as vice-presidents, rectors and deans who provide context-specific counsel and help with supporting new initiatives. An external board may consist of national and international entrepreneurship experts who can provide strategic insights into current developments within the field.

A regional entrepreneurship council made up of local industry representatives, politicians and other relevant stakeholders can help connect your activities to the existing local entrepreneurial ecosystem.

If you are part of a research-driven HEI, setting up a scientific council may provide valuable guidance on strengthening your international research profile.

Actions & Formats

Actions & Formats	Timespan
Form an entrepreneurship council that brings together local key stakeholders.	Medium-term
Create an entrepreneurship board to challenge and mentor your organisation. Include internal decision-makers and external stakeholders on the board.	Medium-term
Set up a scientific council of advisors to advance your entrepreneurship research agenda.	Long-term

Applicable Profiles

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

4 Internal Performer, 5 Regional Performer, 6 International Performer, 7 Guru

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FIGURE 4. EXAMPLE OF AN HEINNOVATE TEMPLATE

Organisation into Work Packages			
Work Package	Activities Included	Work Package Leader	Estimated Time Frame

- **Step 4: Act.** At this stage, institutions are encouraged to launch pilot projects, programmes, and/or institutional reforms that promote innovation and entrepreneurship. It is very important to use KPIs to monitor progress and adjust actions as necessary, regardless of the chosen path. Participants were also introduced to the [EIT Higher Education Initiative](#) funding opportunity, which offers support to implement an Innovation Vision Action Plan (IVAP) based on their HEInnovate roadmap.

To conclude, participants were explained the key **benefits** of using HEInnovate for higher education institutions and European University alliances. **For universities**, the tool offers an evidence-based map of strengths and weaknesses, enabling institutions to identify and address areas for improvement. As the Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje highlighted, *“the tool helped us evaluate our innovation and entrepreneurship capacities”*. Beyond diagnostics, HEInnovate fosters a shared language that mobilises the academic community.

For European Universities alliances, HEInnovate serves as an alliance-wide baseline for peer learning that, without ranking institutions, supports longitudinal improvement cycles tied to innovation and entrepreneurship work packages. The U!REKA alliance found that *“the self-assessment helped us identify where our alliance is strong and where we saw room for development,”* and plans to repeat the process in 2027. Ultimately, HEInnovate acts as a trigger for reflection and inspiration, guiding joint strategies — or, as U!REKA put it, *“HEInnovate is more than a diagnostic — it’s a compass.”*

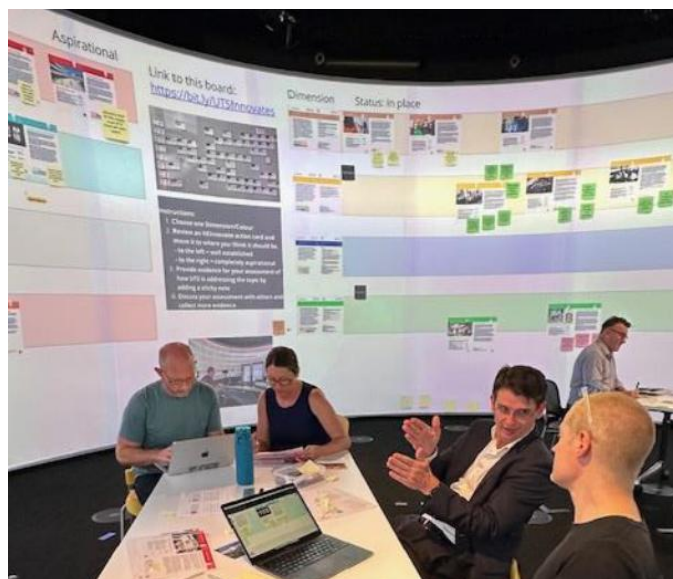
Institutional Transformation with HEInnovate at the University of Technology Sydney (UTS)

Martin Bliemel, Director of Innovation at the University of Technology Sydney (UTS), discussed how he applied HEInnovate in shaping the university’s innovation strategy. As Australia’s leading young university, UTS is recognised for its creative and entrepreneurial educational model. Martin’s use of HEInnovate focused on engaging the university community, conducting collaborative assessments, and synthesising insights into a coherent strategic direction.

UTS centred its efforts on the [HEInnovate Action Cards](#), which were used during four interactive workshops held in the university’s [360-degree data arena](#). These sessions brought together 38 participants from across the institution, including deputy vice-chancellors, heads of schools, student representatives, and professional staff.

During the sessions, participants used sticky notes to annotate the action cards, marking either existing examples of UTS activities related to each topic, or new ideas for future initiatives. This exercise generated more than 450 notes of evidence and suggestions. Additionally, participants placed coloured dots to categorise cards into four groups: “Start Now” (red), “Quick Wins” (yellow), “Keep Strong” (green), and “Develop & Sustain” (blue).

FIGURE 5. PICTURE OF ONE OF THE HEINNOVATE WORKSHOPS AT UTS DATA ARENA



All inputs were transferred to a Miro board and consolidated into a clear visual roadmap highlighting the university's strategic strengths and gaps. Cards were positioned on the left side of the board to represent activities already implemented, while those placed further to the right indicated aspirational goals. Building on the prioritisation outcomes from these workshops, UTS is now in the process of formalising its Innovation Strategy.

As part of his presentation, Martin shared a URL with all participants, giving them access to the Miro board template that UTS used at the start of its exercise. While the model is not intended to be replicated without adaptation, it serves as a valuable resource for participants to take inspiration from and tailor to their own institutional contexts.

FIGURE 6. PICTURE OF ONE OF THE HEINNOVATE WORKSHOPS AT UTS DATA ARENA



Martin highlighted three key benefits of using the HEInnovate framework. First, it enabled UTS to “connect the dots” between previously separate initiatives, fostering alignment across different stakeholder groups. Second, it helped reveal blind spots and areas requiring improvement. Third, it established a shared vocabulary that supported

institutional coherence. His experience illustrated how HEInnovate can serve as a structured yet adaptable engagement tool to guide institutional transformation.

Q&A and Closing Remarks

The session concluded with an engaging Q&A. Participants began by asking about the capacity needed to implement HEInnovate in the format used at UTS, to which Martin replied that they were allocated 0.5 FTE during this initiative. There were also questions about who the appropriate stakeholders to include in this process were. Flávia explained that the stakeholders involved depended on each institution's specific purpose and the reasons for engaging with HEInnovate. She emphasised the tool's flexibility and the importance of structuring the process in a way that aligns with their institution's objectives.

Conclusion

As the webinar finished, Flávia Colus invited participants to remain engaged with the HEInnovate community through:

- [Train the Trainer November session \(Online\)](#).
- Contributing to HEInnovate's case study library,
- Participating in our next Info Session (December)
- Hosting workshops on their campus
- And joining the [Community for Educational Innovation](#).