



RIHEI

RESPONSIBLE AND IMPACTFUL UNIVERSITIES AS SUSTAINABLE GROWTH AND ENTERPRISE CATALYSTS IN GEORGIA



NEWSLETTER 1



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

Project Number: 101125355 (ERASMUS-EDU-2023-CBHE)

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Welcome to the first edition of the RiHEI Project Newsletter, your comprehensive guide to the transformation of Georgian higher education. This newsletter serves as a bridge between our stakeholders and the pioneering initiatives shaping the future of education in Georgia. In this inaugural issue, we are excited to share:

- An in-depth look at RiHEI's vision for modernizing Georgian higher education
- Latest updates from our successful Tbilisi meeting
- Spotlight features on two of our key partners:
Kutaisi International University and the University of Lodz

Through these publications, we aim to keep you informed about our progress, milestones, and demonstrate how the RiHEI project is fostering innovation, inclusivity, and sustainable growth across Georgia's higher education landscape.

Join us on this transformative journey as we build stronger connections between academia, industry, and society.

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RiHEI

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Project Title: Responsible and Impactful Universities as Sustainable Growth and Enterprise Catalysts in Georgia (RiHEI)

Project Duration: January 2024 – December 2026 (36 months)

Funded By: Erasmus+ Programme, European Union

The RiHEI project is a transformative initiative aimed at turning Georgian higher education institutions (HEIs) into engines of sustainable growth, innovation, and entrepreneurship. This project addresses critical challenges such as the skills mismatch between graduates and the labor market, limited collaboration between academia and industry, and the inclusion of marginalized communities, particularly those from rural areas.

By fostering stronger links between education, research, and industry, RiHEI focuses on the modernization and internationalization of Georgian universities, aligning them with European Union standards. The project emphasizes governance reform and the adoption of frameworks such as HEInnovate and Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI), ensuring that Georgian HEIs are not only modernized but also socially responsible and inclusive.

In addition to enhancing governance, RiHEI places a strong focus on improving student services, promoting STEAM education (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics), and creating public-private partnerships that will drive both economic and social development. The project is committed to ensuring access to education for marginalized groups, empowering individuals from diverse backgrounds, and fostering gender equality.

Consortium

The project unites six distinguished institutions from Poland, Germany, and Georgia:

- University of Lodz (UOL), Poland – Project Coordinator
- Martin-Luther University Halle-Wittenberg (MLU), Germany
- TUM International GmbH (TUMint), Germany
- Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University (TSU), Georgia
- Kutaisi International University (KIU), Georgia
- Gori State University (GSU), Georgia

Key Project Initiatives

RiHEI encompasses several groundbreaking components:

- University Transformation Weeks featuring specialized training on governance reform and sustainability and student services.
- Comprehensive capacity-building toolkits for enhancing university governance, fostering innovation, and improving student support.
- RiHEI Digital Platform for cross-institutional collaboration, mentorship, and knowledge sharing among partners.
- Industry-recognized microcredential certification frameworks aimed at improving graduate employability and bridging the gap between academia and industry needs.
- Culminating conference planned in Kutaisi to showcase project outcomes and its impact on the modernization of higher education in Georgia

Impact on Georgian Education

The project aims to deliver comprehensive benefits:

- **For Students:** The project will enhance career readiness through innovative programs, personalized pathways, and expanded STEAM education opportunities, ensuring that graduates are well-prepared for the job market. Improved access to education will benefit rural and marginalized communities, fostering inclusivity in higher education.
- **For Universities:** Participating universities will experience modernization aligned with EU standards, strengthened governance, and the implementation of HEInnovate and Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) frameworks. These changes will bolster international networks, research output, and partnerships with industry.
- **For Society:** The project will contribute to economic growth and job creation through strengthened public-private partnerships, while promoting inclusive access to higher education. These efforts will benefit all segments of Georgian society, creating a more equitable and prosperous future.

For more information about the RiHEI project and upcoming events, please visit project website www.rihei.eu

ONGOING PROGRESS IN THE RIHEI PROJECT: F2F MEETING IN TBILISI

The RiHEI project continues to make strides toward transforming Georgian higher education institutions into pillars of innovation and sustainable growth. Recently, all partners gathered for a Face-to-Face (F2F) meeting in Tbilisi, where progress, challenges, and the next steps were discussed.

Key Highlights from the Tbilisi Meeting



The F2F meeting in Tbilisi was a pivotal moment in the ongoing development of the RiHEI project. The meeting brought together representatives from the University of Lodz, Martin Luther University, Kutaisi International University, Tbilisi State University, Gori State University, and TUM International GmbH. The meeting produced several breakthrough initiatives that will accelerate the project's implementation across Georgia. Key developments include:

- The establishment of a unified digital workspace on MS Teams, enhancing collaboration among partner institutions
- Advanced planning for the innovative University Transformation Week, to be hosted in Kutaisi with a new decentralized approach to maximize accessibility
- Development of comprehensive capacity-building toolkits focusing on governance reform, innovation, and student services
- Implementation of a microcredential certification framework aligned with industry demands

Next Steps and Future Activities

The next phase of the RiHEI project will involve further refinement of the training plan, continued development of the capacity-building toolkits, and the organization of the University Transformation Weeks across Georgia. The project partners also planned additional Face-to-Face meetings in 2025 to continue the momentum and ensure the successful implementation of the project's activities.

With the successful launch of the RiHEI platform and the first series of training events on the horizon, the project is poised to have a transformative impact on higher education in Georgia, supporting the nation's economic and social development for years to come.

Stay tuned for more updates on the progress of RiHEI and the exciting developments in the coming months!



ABOUT KUTAISI INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY (KIU)

Kutaisi International University (KIU), established in 2020, is the only international public higher education institution established in the history of independent Georgia. KIU is located on a **160-hectare eco-friendly** campus in Kutaisi - one of Europe's oldest cities - surrounded by oak forests and the Rioni River. With over **1,400 students** and a growing team of renowned **Georgian and international academics**, KIU's **Management, Computer Science, and Mathematics** schools offer globally accredited undergraduate, master's, and PhD programs, all taught in English and developed in partnership with the **Technical University of Munich (TUM)** and **TUM International GmbH**. Known for its cutting-edge infrastructure, including the upcoming **Kutaisi Hadron Therapy Center** for groundbreaking medical and nuclear physics research, KIU is rapidly becoming a regional hub for education, science, and technology, fostering innovation and driving economic development.

HOW DOES THE PARTNER UNDERSTAND THE AIM OF THE PROJECT AND VIEW CHALLENGES IN THE FIELD?

Kutaisi International University (KIU) recognizes that universities must evolve beyond traditional teaching and research roles to become drivers of sustainable and responsible growth. KIU views the RiHEL project as a transformative step toward aligning Georgian universities with broader development goals, including fostering youth employment, driving regional economic growth, and modernizing higher education. By bridging gaps between education, research, and industry, the project empowers KIU to enhance graduate employability, promote entrepreneurship, and advance research commercialization. Adopting EU standards like HEInnovate and Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) strengthens governance, enriches academic offerings, and fosters cross-border collaboration, supporting KIU's vision of becoming a regional innovation hub.



KIU is committed to inclusivity, emphasizing equitable access to education for rural and marginalized communities. Initiatives such as STEAM outreach, student support systems, and scholarships aim to empower underrepresented groups. By addressing challenges like skills mismatches, weak industry-science links, and limited innovation ecosystems, KIU leverages the RiHEI project to drive sustainable growth and prepare future generations to thrive in a global economy.

HOW IS THIS PROJECT IMPORTANT FOR THE PARTNER, AND WHAT DIRECT IMPACTS DO YOU ANTICIPATE ON/WITHIN?

The RiHEI project is valuable for Kutaisi International University (KIU) as it aligns with the university's mission to transform into a leading regional hub for education, science, and innovation. The project supports KIU's goal of fostering sustainable growth, driving entrepreneurship, and modernizing higher education governance. Through RiHEI, KIU anticipates significant advancements in aligning its programs with international standards, particularly by integrating frameworks such as HEInnovate and Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI). These efforts will enhance the university's ability to deliver quality education, strengthen its research capacity, and increase its global visibility, ultimately positioning KIU as a catalyst for Georgia's economic and social development.

The direct impacts of the project on KIU include improved employability of graduates through industry-relevant skills and innovative academic offerings. The establishment of public-private partnerships and enhanced commercialization of research will create new avenues for collaboration and innovation. The project will also strengthen student support services, ensuring inclusivity by providing tailored opportunities for rural and marginalized communities. Additionally, the development of sustainable campuses and advanced digital platforms will foster an environment conducive to lifelong learning and entrepreneurship. KIU envisions the RiHEI project as a transformative framework to prepare its students and faculty for global challenges, while significantly contributing to the modernization of Georgia's higher education system.

WHAT PROJECT ACTIVITIES/DELIVERABLES ARE YOU MOST EXCITED ABOUT?

Kutaisi International University (KIU) is particularly excited about the **University Transformation Weeks**, which focus on governance reform, green campus development, and student support enhancements. The development of **capacity-building toolkits** and the launch of the **RiHEI Digital Platform** are also highlights, providing valuable resources for modernization and fostering collaboration. KIU is enthusiastic about implementing **microcredential certification frameworks** to enhance student employability and looks forward to hosting the **final project conference**, showcasing achievements and Georgia's leadership in higher education innovation. These activities align with KIU's vision to become a regional hub for education and innovation.



ABOUT UNIVERSITY OF LODZ

University of Lodz is a responsible higher education institution, focusing its actions on intercultural and social integration. The university promotes equality through diversity: people of 95 nationalities study at the University of Lodz, and each year there are almost 3000 international students studying full time or within exchange programs! The University of Lodz strives to keep high, all-European level of education as well as it successfully adjusts to the changing labour market both in the local and global context. It especially excels in social sciences (economics/business management), legal sciences and linguistics.

Main experts involved in the project are:

- **T. Bartosz Kalinowski**, PhD, DSc, Associate professor at the Faculty of Management, University of Lodz with almost 20 years of experience in teaching and research. Head of Centre of Excellence in Research -KnowBase at the University of Lodz. Experienced project manager and researcher in 25+ externally funded projects (H2020, HEIEIT, Erasmus+, LLP, LdV, etc.) on sustainability, supply chain management, quality management, entrepreneurship, innovation management, digitalisation, industry 4.0, business models development.
- **Paweł Głodek**, PhD, DSc, associate Professor at the University of Lodz with over 20 years of experience in teaching and research. Lecturer in entrepreneurship, innovation management and technology commercialisation management. Experienced researcher and project manager in national and international projects.
- **Magdalena Wiśniewska**, PhD, who works as an assistant professor at the Department of City and Regional Management, Faculty of Management, University of Lodz. She focuses her scientific and research interests on the cooperation of various stakeholders for local and regional development.
- **Małgorzata Żak-Skwierczyńska**, PhD, a specialist in local, supralocal and regional management, integrated management, territorial governance, functional areas, partnership building, project management (including integrated development projects).

HOW DOES THE PARTNER UNDERSTAND THE AIM OF THE PROJECT AND VIEW CHALLENGES IN THE FIELD?

Universities are part of a wider ecosystem including business entities, public authorities and society. They are no longer just creating science and teaching. Modern universities tend to generate a positive impact on their environment. This requires implementing new strategies and changing a mindset. The project aims to embed this concept in Georgian universities to facilitate their responsible and sustainable impact on the Georgian economy, society, and space.

HOW IS THIS PROJECT IMPORTANT FOR THE PARTNER AND WHAT DIRECT IMPACTS DO YOU ANTICIPATE ON/WITHIN?

University of Lodz is one of the leading HEIs in Poland. UOL has recently developed a new innovation and research strategy for years 2021-2030 based on the RiEcoLab project (EIT HEI funded) upon which RiHEI is also based. The main directions of the new strategies will focus on science and its discovery for society, sustainability, building a culture of entrepreneurship and innovation, etc. The institutional transformation capacity and lessons learned from University of Lodz will be supported by the Faculty of Management which has a long track of different projects and expertise in supporting innovation, commercialization and technology transfer in almost all areas of business (including these specified in RiHEI). This allows the University of Lodz to engage in the project, but also gain new knowledge and capacities thanks to cooperation with Georgian Universities due to their specificity.

WHAT PROJECT ACTIVITIES/DELIVERABLES ARE YOU / IS THE PARTNER MOST EXCITED ABOUT?

UOL will empower its Technology Transfer Centre (being a University's unit) as capacity provider both WP2 and WP3. UOL has coordinated more than 50 Erasmus+ projects and is a highly capable lead partner with a dedicated project management unit capable to manage RiHEI. UOL, due to its past Erasmus+ expertise, is also highly capable to lead WP2 (capacity development) and to ensure a balanced co-creation among the EU and Georgian partners when it comes to producing the WP2 toolkits. UOL will facilitate a mentorship scheme to ensure that the Georgian partners learn while working on the toolkit development. As a member of a European University Alliance, UOL will organize one study visit for the Georgian partners during one of the meetings of the alliances (WP3). This alliance – European University of Post-Industrial Cities (UNIC) network is one of the 44 networks of European Universities.

European Universities is a model of international universities of the future, promoting European values and identity and revolutionising the quality and competitiveness of European higher education through the joint implementation of innovative solutions in the fields of education and science and deep institutional integration. The network's themes address the challenges faced by post-industrial cities, the role of universities in their transformation and the capacity building of cities in key areas such as inclusion, superdiversity and sustainability. Given this experience, UOL will also provide guidelines and mitigating strategies for the WP4 modernisation strategies to help the Georgian HEIs avoid common pitfalls in this process. Ultimately, UOL, as lead partner, will facilitate the external QA selection and review (as in-kind contribution) from their budget to ensure that the project adheres to upmost standards.



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