

Shkodër, Albania

DAAD 2023

Workshop

The impact of pandemic years to informatics education: review and next steps



Implemented by



PROSEED2.0



Empowering the Next Generation: Mentoring Students in the ConnectIT Project for Digitalizing MSMEs' Business Processes

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5th September 2023, Shkodra, Albania

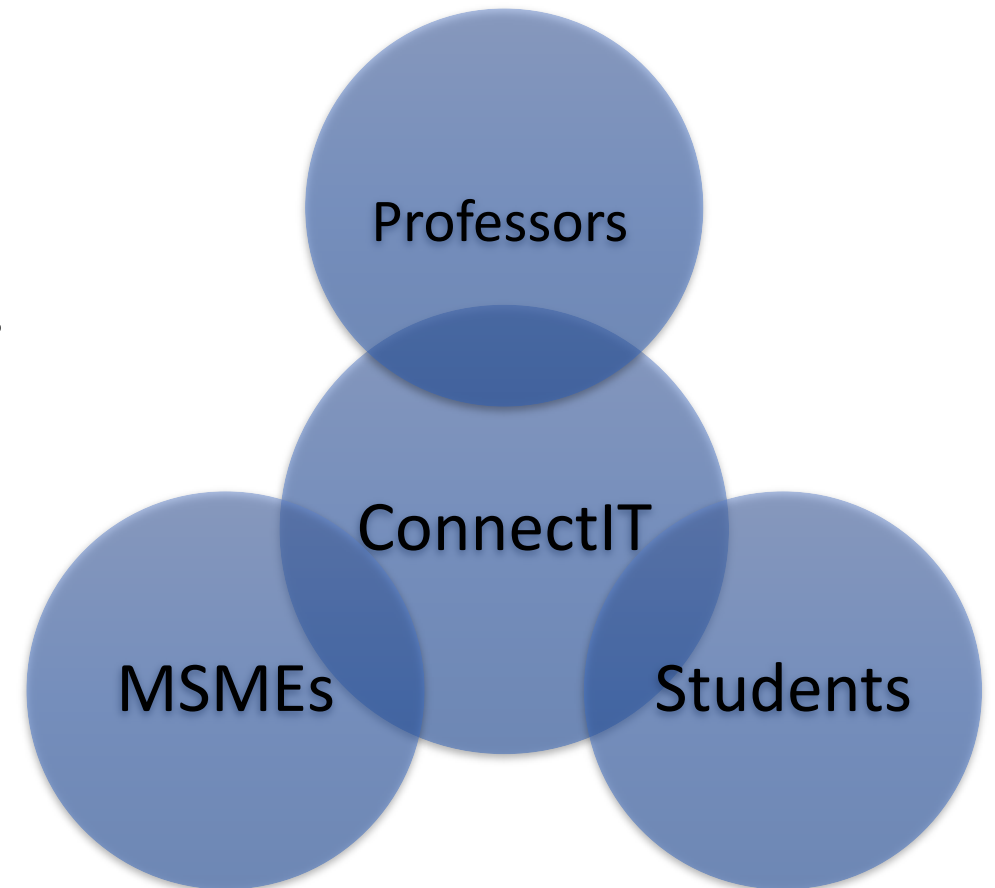


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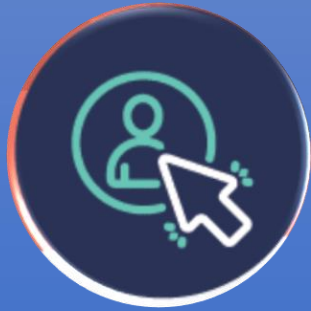


ConnectIT Project

- Connecting students and MSMEs to digitize business processes.
- Smarter business by making better use of IT.
- Let university teams collaborate with entrepreneurs and make digital innovation work.
- Setup of an ecosystem to facilitate practical assignments within educational programs.
- Supported by GIZ ProSEED2.0 and EU4Innovation, in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance and Economy.



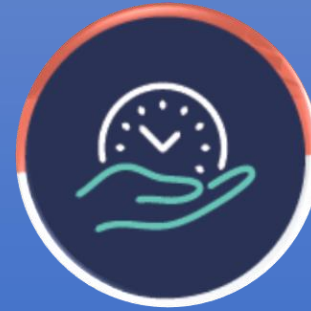
Project Aim



Provides educational access to and knowledge sharing between universities and MSMEs



Supports hands-on digital innovation and facilitate impactful projects for entrepreneurs



More practical assignments within educational programmes to enhance student experience



Project Tasks

- Assignments are carried out by the students and supervised/coordinated by lecturers and professional experts.
- Recruit practical assignments (cases) at micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs).
- Identify assignments specifically tailored to subject, internship, minor or graduation project.
- Support and guidance of entrepreneurs within the projects through (inter)national experts.

After Pandemic

- Students participating in the project are the products of online learning resulting from the pandemic.
- The experience gained from online learning helps students interact in a hybrid manner, combining face-to-face meetings with remote work from home.
- This project helps students work together and strengthen their collaboration.
- During the pandemic, a significant gap in interaction emerged between students and companies. Many companies either did not accept students for internships or allowed them to work mostly online.
- This project presented a valuable opportunity for everyone to work together.

ConnectIT 2.0

- Implemented in 2022-2023
- First Cycle:
 - 2 Universities
 - Faculty of Economics, University of Tirana, Tirana
 - “Aleksandër Moisiu” University, Durrës
 - 109 students divided in 28 teams
 - 25 MSMEs

ConnectIT 2.0

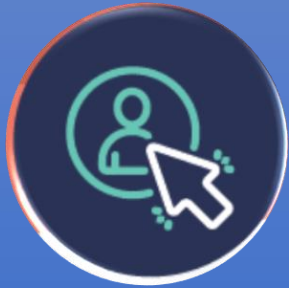
- Second Cycle:
 - 4 Universities
 - Polis University, Tirana - Coordinator
 - Faculty of Information Technology, Polytechnic University of Tirana, Tirana
 - Epoka University, Tirana
 - Metropolitan University of Tirana, Tirana
 - 102 students divided in 26 teams
 - 22 MSMEs

MSMEs Perspective

- Albanian MSMEs with 2 to 50 employees in all sectors, motivated to digitize their companies.
- Smarter business by making better use of IT.
- Utilize the latest knowledge by collaborating with IT students.
- Saving of time and money for the company.
- Increase company revenue while staying up-to-date.
- Participation is free and only requires a commitment from the company's responsible employee in requests' specification and communication with the students.
- Building on practical projects related to digitization, data, online sales, and digital marketing.

Students Perspective

- Computer Engineering students in Tirana region, including 3rd-year Bachelor's and Master's Degree students.



Get to know and improve their network by working with exciting companies next door.



Work in Hands-on and impactful projects together with entrepreneurs



Gain practical working experience for their resume and earn at the same time.



University Perspective

- Strengthening the university-industry (labor market) connection.
- Promotion of the university's image.
- Completion of mandatory internships in bachelor studies.
- Enhancing curriculum relevance through industry collaboration.
- Providing students with real-world experience and practical skills.
- A way to evaluate the students' knowledge acquired during their studies.

Activities Timetable

Workshop 1 : 6th – 7th April 2023

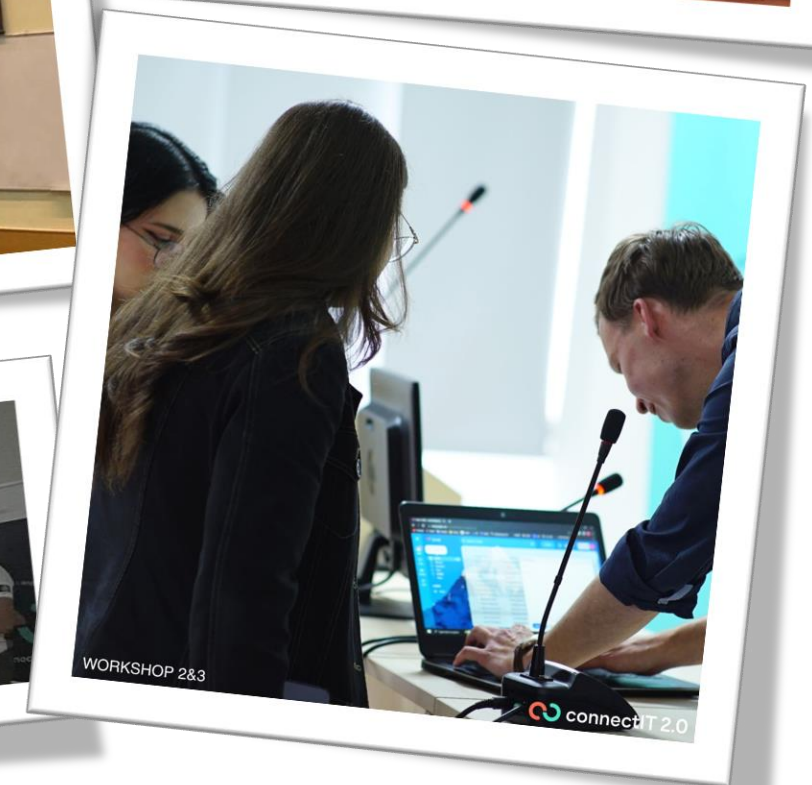
- Introduction on project scope
- Match-making IT student teams + challenges MSMEs
- Allocation of challenges per student team
- Development of a workplan for each participating team
- International Expert: Mr. Ynte Bakhuizen



Activities Timetable (2)

Workshop 2&3: 24th – 27th May 2023

- Recap experiences so far
- Keeping the client onboard and excited
- Work together as a team on the challenge
- Demo pitches



Activities Timetable (3)

2nd Showcase Event: June 13th, 2023

- Speech given by representatives from GIZ (ProSEED 2.0 & EU4I), Ministry of Finance and Economy, and participating Universities.
- ConnectIT Testimonials – experience shared by participating MSMEs.
- 7 student teams showcasing their solutions.
- Awarding of certificates.

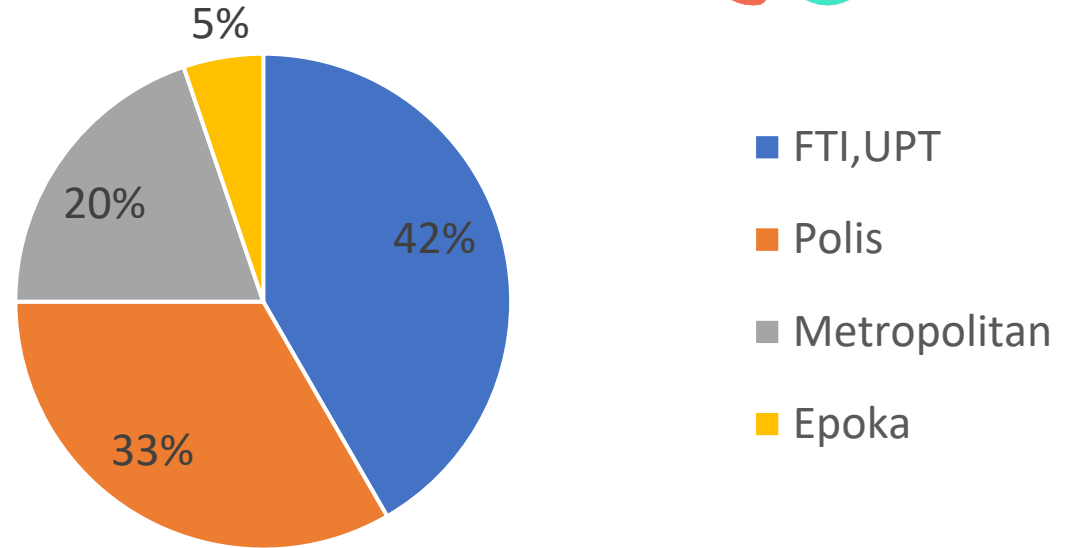
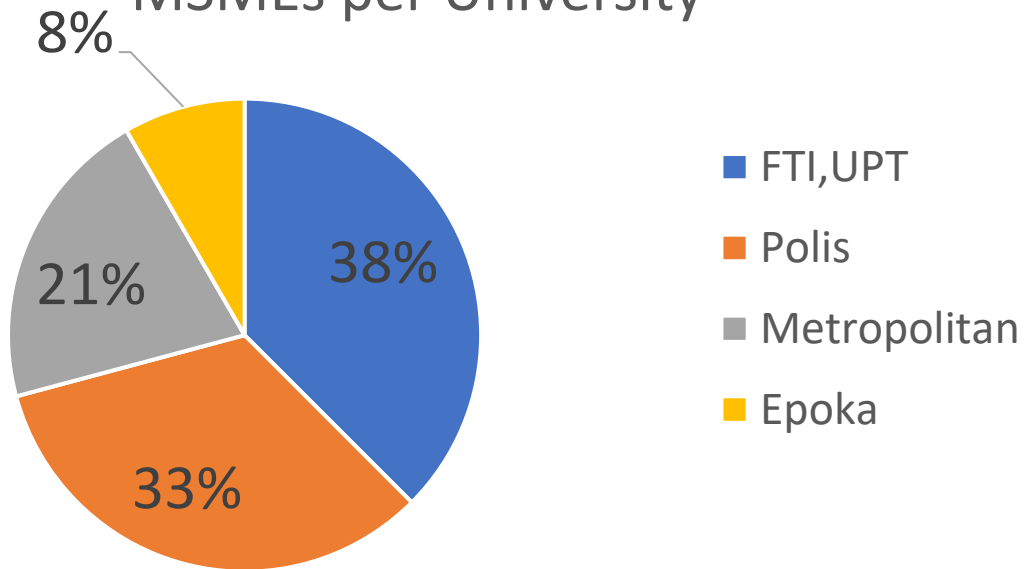


2nd Showcase Event

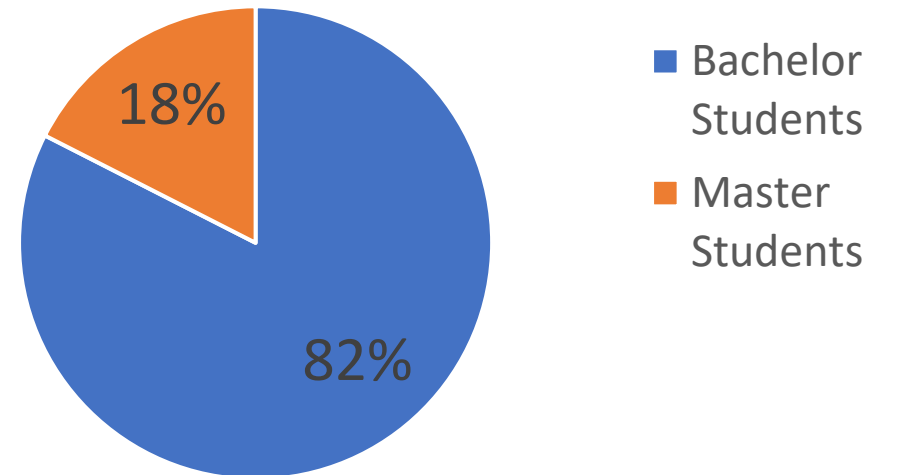


Statistics

MSMEs per University



FTI Students



Student's Feedback

- “The ConnectIT project is an experience from which you learn a lot and grow. It gave us the opportunity to work in the real world of business and website development, allowing us to communicate with customers, understand them and offer them the right product. The organization and management of the project was very good.”
- “I would recommend the project from 1 to 10, 10 for the experience gained and security in the labor market in the future.”



Challenges

- Students had to work on a concrete project from scratch and deliver a specific IT product.
- Companies should clearly explain their needs and ideas.
- The students had to understand and implement the company's requirements.
- Lack of communication between students and the company
 - The involvement of the company without payment often affects the lack of full commitment to the project
- Extra costs such as hardware infrastructure or hosting platforms that companies were not willing to pay.

Conclusion

- **Certificate of Achievement**
 - All students participating in ConnectIT received a certificate of achievement.
- **Internship Credits**
 - Faculty of Information Technology, UPT decided to recognize participation in the project as internship credits.
 - A valuable recognition of the practical experience gained by students and their academic advancement.
- **Positive Experience**
 - The overall experience for students, MSMEs, and academic staff was very good.
 - A successful and fulfilling project experience.
- **Future Participation**
 - The positive experience will lead to future participation in the following years.
 - The project has established a strong foundation and reputation, which bodes well for its sustainability.



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Thank you!

Questions

