

HOW TO TURN COVID-19 CRISIS INTO AN OPPORTUNITY FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

a brief guide for water educators

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University of Nis



**Strengthening of master curricula in water resources management
for the Western Balkans HEIs and stakeholders**

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List of abbreviations

AASKM	Academy of Applied Studies of Kosovo and Metohija
AUTH	Aristotle University of Thessaloniki
BOKU	University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna
CBHE	Capacity Building in Higher Education
EACEA	Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency
HEI	Higher Education Institution
LLL	Life Long Learning
NMBU	Norwegian University of Life Sciences, Norway
PWMC VV	Public Water Management Company "Vode Vojvodine"
SWARM	Strengthening of master curricula in water resources management for the Western Balkans HEIs and stakeholders
UACEG	University of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy, Bulgaria
UNI	University of Nis, Serbia
UL	University of Lisbon, Portugal
UoM	University of Montenegro
UNIRIFCE	University of Rijeka, Croatia
UNMO	Dzemal Bijedic University of Mostar
UNS	University of Novi Sad
UNSA	University of Sarajevo
UPKM	University of Pristina in Kosovska Mitrovica
WRM	Water Resources Management

1 Introduction

“How to turn COVID-19 crisis into an opportunity for higher education” is a brief guide for water educators produced under the work package (WP) 4 “Implementation of developed master curricula and trainings” and activity 4.1 “Implementation of developed master curricula” of the Erasmus+ Capacity Building in the Field of Higher Education project „Strengthening of master curricula in water resources management for the Western Balkans HEIs and stakeholders“ (SWARM, www.swarm.ni.ac.rs).

The rapid spread of the COVID-19 virus throughout Europe is having a substantial impact on higher education, with almost all institutions having closed their doors for face-to-face activities and replacing them with online courses. At the same time the Covid-19 pandemic affected whole human population and all our activities, including also the SWARM project. Nevertheless, after initial shock and time necessary to introduce modifications to project work, we switched to on-line working mode.

The Covid-19 outbreak created threat to produce delay in realization of ongoing or planned project activities and bring project execution in some serious situation. More information on how coronavirus is affecting Erasmus+ activities, what changes are taking place, and what help is available on the following link https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/resources/coronavirus-impact_en.

According to the Survey on the impact of COVID-19 on European Universities (<https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/document/coronavirus-european-universities-initiative-impact-survey-results>), it is important to be part of a European University to better cope with the challenges of the crisis as well as the accelerator effect the European Universities Initiative has in terms of achieving deeper institutional cooperation, virtual campuses and blended mobility for all students and staff.

2 Improve eLearning with Water Harmony eduwater.net

[eduwater.net](https://www.eduwater.net) is the Water Harmony Community Hub, a platform for exchange of eLearning content and experience in water-related higher education. Currently it hosts 7 eLearning courses ready for import into learning management system of your university (Moodle, Canvas or any other):

1. Water Resource Management
2. Water Supply
3. Academic writing and presentations
4. Innovation & Entrepreneurship
5. Wastewater Treatment & Engineering
6. Industrial Water Management
7. Laboratory practicum

1  **Search courses and view content**

2  **Download course files**

3  **Import to your university eLearning platform**

4  **Use as e-course or in-class**

3 Access world leading knowledge resources for free

Several publishers made their resources temporarily available for free:

- In March 2020, Springer Nature launched a global program to support learning and teaching at higher education institutions worldwide. Access more than 500 key textbooks across Springer Nature's eBook subject collections for free <https://www.springernature.com/gp/librarians/news-events/all-news-articles/industry-news-initiatives/free-access-to-textbooks-for-institutions-affected-by-coronaviru/17855960>
- Access journals of the International Water Association for free https://iwaponline.com/search-results?f_ContentType=Journal+Articles&access_openaccess=true&access_free=true

4 Use free opportunities of professional development

There are a few alternatives for professional development free of charge:

- Enrol in the Water Harmony Eurasia (www.Waterh.net) professional development course (in Russian)

This course focuses on digital tools in teaching, cyber security, publishing skills, online water quality monitoring etc.

- Attend **IWA Learn** webinars and courses <https://iwa-network.org/iwa-learn/>

This is the place for learning and professional development in the Water Sector.

Professionals in the water sector require continuous development to be able to stay abreast with the changing environment circumstances. No matter in which stage of your career, IWA provides you with guidance and opportunities to build up the competences required to succeed. This includes a set of tools on how to develop your career, as well as opportunity of professional updating, learning, training and networking.

- Enrol in **IHE Delft** Open Education courses <https://ocw.un-ihe.org/>

An IHE-OCW is typically (but not necessarily) a by-product of an existing face-to-face or online course of the Institute. The IHE-OCW educational resources are organized in a course format which contains the non-interactive copyright-free parts of IHE courses to form a coherent set of educational materials that allow for free online self-study.

- Enrol in the **EFFECTIVE ONLINE TEACHING PRACTICES** course https://acue.org/?acue_courses=online-teaching-essentials

Students are learning online in greater numbers than ever before, and faculty need more than the technical basics — they must be fully prepared to use pedagogical approaches that make the most of an online experience.

This 25-module course in **effective online teaching practices** concentrates on teaching practices effective for online instruction. Based on the same evidence-based pedagogy as ACUE's course in effective teaching practices, Effective Online Teaching Practices was designed in collaboration with online teaching and learning experts to empower faculty to be impactful online instructors and ensure student success today and in the future.

- Enrol in the How to Teach Online Courses <https://www.futurelearn.com/subjects/teaching-courses/how-to-teach-online>

This is the place to explore the best ways to teach online with these free online courses for educators who need to connect remotely with their students. Teaching online isn't a completely different skill from teaching in person, but it does require knowledge of the techniques and best practices to get the job done. With the right training, educators should be able to comfortably bridge the distance between themselves and students using the internet.

Indeed, even for those unaffected by the chaos caused by COVID-19, knowing how to teach online is a valuable skill for any educator – an aspect of learning being employed more and more by educational institutions as part of their everyday curriculum.

- Explore Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange <https://eua.eu/partners-news/470-erasmus-virtual-exchange-news-and-opportunities-for-universities-in-this-crucial-moment.html>

The Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange team is committed to supporting higher education institutions and students, as they adapt their working arrangements to slow the spread of coronavirus.

- Social Innovation in Water and Climate Change in Africa, Afrialliance/IHE-Delft course <https://afrialliance.org/events/afrialliance-mooc-social-innovation-water-and-climate-change-africa>

The increasing manifestations of Climate Change on the African continent present many challenges for African stakeholders. This requires novel and holistic approaches in order to deal with the impacts on water resources and society. One such approach is social innovation - tackling societal, water-related challenges arising from Climate Change by combining the technological and non-technological dimensions of innovation.

The main goal of this course is to increase awareness of the potential of social innovation to address water and climate challenges in Africa.

5 Better understand the lockdown impacts and find solutions for your university

5.1 General advice

UNESCO 10 recommendations to plan distance learning solutions and ensure that learning remains uninterrupted during the COVID-19 outbreak <https://en.unesco.org/news/covid-19-10-recommendations-plan-distance-learning-solutions>

School closures in a growing number of countries to contain the spread of COVID-19 are disrupting the education of millions students across the globe. UNESCO is sharing 10 recommendations to ensure that learning remains uninterrupted during this period.

1. Examine the readiness and choose the most relevant tools.

Decide on the use high-technology and low-technology solutions based on the reliability of local power supplies, internet connectivity, and digital skills of teachers and students. This could range through integrated digital learning platforms, video lessons, MOOCs, to broadcasting through radios and TVs.

2. Ensure inclusion of the distance learning programmes.

Implement measures to ensure that students including those with disabilities or from low-income backgrounds have access to distance learning programmes, if only a limited number of them have access to digital devices. Consider temporarily decentralizing such devices from computer labs to families and support them with internet connectivity.

3. Protect data privacy and data security.

Assess data security when uploading data or educational resources to web spaces, as well as when sharing them with other organizations or individuals. Ensure that the use of applications and platforms does not violate students' data privacy.

4. Prioritize solutions to address psychosocial challenges before teaching.

Mobilize available tools to connect schools, parents, teachers and students with each other. Create communities to ensure regular human interactions, enable social caring measures, and address possible psychosocial challenges that students may face when they are isolated.

5. Plan the study schedule of the distance learning programmes.

Organize discussions with stakeholders to examine the possible duration of school closures and decide whether the distance learning programme should focus on teaching new knowledge or enhance students' knowledge of prior lessons. Plan the schedule depending on the situation of the affected zones, level of studies, needs of students needs, and availability of parents. Choose the appropriate learning methodologies based on the status of school closures and home-based quarantines. Avoid learning methodologies that require face-to-face communication.

6. Provide support to teachers and parents on the use of digital tools.

Organize brief training or orientation sessions for teachers and parents as well, if monitoring and facilitation are needed. Help teachers to prepare the basic settings such as solutions to the use of internet data if they are required to provide live streaming of lessons.

7. Blend appropriate approaches and limit the number of applications and platforms.

Blend tools or media that are available for most students, both for synchronous communication and lessons, and for asynchronous learning. Avoid overloading students and parents by asking them to download and test too many applications or platforms.

8. Develop distance learning rules and monitor students' learning process.

Define the rules with parents and students on distance learning. Design formative questions, tests, or exercises to monitor closely students' learning process. Try to use tools to support submission of students' feedback and avoid overloading parents by requesting them to scan and send students' feedback.

9. Define the duration of distance learning units based on students' self-regulation skills.

Keep a coherent timing according to the level of the students' self-regulation and metacognitive abilities especially for livestreaming classes. Preferably, the unit for primary school students should not be more than 20 minutes, and no longer than 40 minutes for secondary school students.

10. Create communities and enhance connection.

Create communities of teachers, parents and school managers to address sense of loneliness or helplessness, facilitate sharing of experience and discussion on coping strategies when facing learning difficulties.

Universities must help shape the post-COVID-19 world

<https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20200413152542750>

The post-COVID-19 world must be based on the values we cherish: democracy, human rights and the rule of law as well as social justice, inclusion and equity. Higher education can add momentum by renewing our commitment to our core values of academic freedom, institutional autonomy and engagement by students, faculty and staff, and re-emphasising the role of higher education institutions as societal actors for the public good.

Echoing the Council of Europe, we contend that there are four purposes of higher education: preparation for sustainable employment, preparing students for active citizenship, personal development, creating a broad advanced knowledge base and stimulating research and innovation.

World Bank policy paper <http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/621991586463915490/WB-Tertiary-Education-and-Covid-19-Crisis-for-public-use-April-9.pdf>

Online and distance learning have forced massive adaptation in how information is delivered and how students must learn. Students without access or the resources to afford the technology are being left behind. Student with learning challenges is being left behind. Students with disabilities are being left behind. Institutions away from urban centers and robust infrastructure are being left behind. Institutions with missions to teach those most likely to fall out of the education pipeline are being left behind. This was true before the pandemic, which is exacerbating the speed at which disparities are affecting student persistence and institutional survival.

EAIE How higher education institutions can respond to COVID-19 <https://www.eaie.org/blog/how-higher-education-institutions-respond-covid-19.html>

Offering courses online or deferring the start of their programmes to a later term are two ways to support students affected by the coronavirus.

In light of COVID-19, colleges and universities around the world are taking various actions in order to secure the well-being of their students and staff, as well as members of their communities. The following is a compilation of recommendations based on courses of action those academic institutions have implemented around the world:

- Communicate with your students on campus and support them
- Communicate with your students abroad and support them

- Establish policies regarding study abroad programmes
- Health insurance coverage for all
- Establish policies regarding travel
- Establish support for financial funds
- Communicate with your partners
- Inform your community and break the stigma
- Establish the support needed for new students coming in the fall
- When in doubt, try to be a leader
- Keep your community updated

EAIE Supporting students affected by coronavirus <https://www.eaie.org/blog/supporting-students-coronavirus.html>

In recent months, the emergence of the Coronavirus (also known as COVID-19) has sent ripples across the world of higher education. This outbreak has not only highlighted the vulnerability of international students to such risks, but also the threat to international mobility posed by a virus which knows no borders.

- Tackling social exclusion and discrimination against students
- Cultivating an inclusive response on campus
- Relating to students

5.2 Support for distance education

National learning platforms and tools

<https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse/nationalresponses>

Despite the Omicron variant, schools are open in the majority of countries, supported by health and safety protocols and vaccination programmes. But the costs stand to be tremendous in terms of learning losses, health and well-being and drop-out. Prioritizing education as a public good is crucial to avoid a generational catastrophe and drive a sustainable recovery. To be more resilient, equitable and inclusive, education systems must transform, leveraging technology to benefit all learners and building on the innovations and partnerships catalyzed throughout this crisis.

UNESCO is supporting countries in their efforts to mitigate the impact of school closures, address learning losses, support teachers and adapt education systems, particularly for vulnerable and disadvantaged communities.

To mobilize and support learning continuity, UNESCO has established the Global Education Coalition which today counts 175 members working around three central themes: Gender, connectivity and teachers.

World Digital Library free access resources <https://www.wdl.org/en/>

This collection contains cultural heritage materials gathered during the World Digital Library (WDL) project, including thousands of items contributed by partner organizations worldwide as well as content from Library of Congress collections. The original World Digital Library site (preserved in LC's Web Archives here) and all descriptive metadata were translated from English and made available in six additional languages: Spanish, Portuguese, French, Arabic, Russian, and Chinese. All item records include narrative descriptions submitted by the contributing partners and enhanced by WDL researchers to contextualize the item and its cultural and historical importance. Books, manuscripts, maps, and other primary materials in the WDL collection are presented in their original languages; more than 100 languages are represented, including many lesser known and endangered languages.

Launched in 2009, the World Digital Library was a project of the U.S. Library of Congress, with the support of UNESCO, and contributions from libraries, archives, museums, educational institutions, and international organizations around the world. The WDL sought to preserve and share some of the world's most important cultural objects, increasing access to cultural treasures and significant historical documents to enable discovery, scholarship, and use.

A Resource List by the World Bank's EdTech Team

<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/964121585254860581/pdf/Remote-Learning-Distance-Education-and-Online-Learning-During-the-COVID19-Pandemic-A-Resource-List-by-the-World-Banks-Edtech-Team.pdf>

The selection of resources and platforms that you will find here has been elaborated in order to facilitate the rapid identification of helpful technological solutions that could be used to support remote learning.

The list provided here is not meant to be comprehensive, however, the selection has been driven by prioritizing resources and solutions that are free (or freemium), offline friendly or are available in more than one language (especially beyond, English). This list offers a glimpse of the kind of solutions that can be incorporated to support remote learning for different contexts, levels of connectivity, levels of education or subject.

A growing list of repositories, selection of online libraries and compilation of educational resources, reading materials, lesson plans has been compiled here. You can also find here some of the initiatives adopted by different countries to deliver content and textbooks to the student (and parents).

OneHE is providing support and resources for academics to move to online teaching <https://onehe.org/online-teaching/>

OneHE is proud to be working with a growing number of experts from across the world who are passionate about making teaching better. All courses and activities highlight the small changes you can make in your practice that can lead to lasting and impactful change.

Explore guidelines from **Macmillan International** <https://www.macmillanihe.com//page/teaching-online/>

Ementoring is an option that many higher education institutions may wish to consider particularly when designing an alumni or business mentoring programme. Whilst greater numbers can be included in the programme, there are certainly as many disadvantages as advantages to this method.

Technologies to support curriculum delivery are evolving rapidly, and one of the key developments in the last decade has been what some regard as a revolutionary approach to the ways in which universities provide education: a virtual throwing open of the doors of the academy to smash elitism and provide democratic access to higher education as exemplified by the hyper-hyped phenomenon of MOOCs.

6 Potential of Serious Games for water educators

Digital forums have been launched to the front of business and social venue applications, as the Covid-19 pandemic necessitated transformations in how people interact. A more proficient and targeted use of digital platforms will remain key to many sectors, even in a post-pandemic future.

Opportunities suggested by SMARTEN project (<https://smartenproject.eu/>) should be checked. The European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) launched call for digital education readiness to support projects in school education, vocational education and training, and higher education. This call aimed to enhance online, distance and blended learning - including supporting teachers and trainers, as well as safeguarding the inclusive nature of digital learning opportunities.

SMARTEN is an Erasmus+ project based on serious gaming models, to support digital transition and readiness, with focus on higher education, professional training, and the water sector. The two-year project is centered on smart management of water resources which are vital to life and development. Promoting a digital educational environment of equity and inclusion, and strengthening strategic cooperation between higher education institutions and business partners in the European water sector can contribute to more efficient management of limited water resources.

Serious game on water-food-energy nexus and related EU project (<https://sim4nexus.eu/>) can be recommended. SIM4NEXUS applied the Nexus concept in 12 case studies, implemented at different scales: regional, national, transboundary, European and global. The diversity of case studies allowed to better understand interlinkages of decision making across spatial scales, and support decision making in the short-, medium- and long-term (up to 2030, 2050 and beyond).

Game on Adaptive Planning (<https://delfttools.tudelft.nl/apg-practice/>) can be recommended. The Adaptive Planning Game (<https://seriousgaming.tudelft.nl/game/adaptive-planning-game>) is a completely digital and redesigned version of the original game "Sustainable Delta", a serious game combining a computer-based simulation with board game materials, developed by Deltares. This version of the game is specifically tailored for the online course ProfEd 'Adaptive Planning'.

The game is an experience in planning on a large scale over a long period of time. It takes place in the fictional coastal city of Tainui, which players need to keep safe from flooding, economically stable and sustainable. Player's choices will affect the city and the simulation model which is behind the game.

The original game was played at the table with other participants, so the challenge for us at the gamelab was to change the game for a single player experience. We used stakeholders, tutorials, selection screens and a new user interface to make this possible.

More water games can be found at <https://games4sustainability.org/water-games/>. Water Games is a joint initiative of the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA) and the Centre for Systems Solutions to celebrate the World Water Day.

7 Augmented Collaboration tools

7.1 GroupMap

GroupMap (<https://www.groupmap.com/>) is a real-time online brainstorming tool for events (meetings, workshops, conferences, classrooms). GroupMap offers over 80 brainstorming templates to get your planning, discussions, workshops, and activities started quickly and effectively.

SWOT analysis is a simple, but useful, planning tool for assessing internal and external factors impacting on your organization's success, now and in the future. The SWOT methodology identifies internal strengths (S) and weaknesses (W) of the organization and external Opportunities (O) and Threats (T) in the marketplace.

Because the technique is so simple and versatile, development of a SWOT chart is useful for all industries, anyone who needs to make decisions and manage initiatives, all levels of an organization, existing and new businesses, individuals.

Group mind mapping is a simple but powerful technique for generating an organized, visual representation of related ideas and information among a group of people. The process of developing a group mind map stimulates both creative and analytical thinking and is a proven and effective tool for collaborative brainstorming.

A **KWHLAQ chart** is an extended version of the very popular KWL chart. Both are teaching tools that help to organize thoughts and ideas, before, during, and after a learning exercise. First, students identify what they know about a topic. Then, they think about what they want to research or learn. After the lesson, they then reflect on what they have learned.

A **pros and cons list** is a quick and easy decision-making tool. Pros are arguments FOR taking a particular path. Cons are arguments AGAINST. Once you develop a list detailing both sides of the argument you can make more sensible, informed decisions. To make the technique more objective, especially for complex decisions, you can rate each argument against one or more factors to create a weighted list.

7.2 Miro

Miro (www.miro.com) is a fast, free, and simple-to-use online whiteboard built to help you collaborate with others anytime, anywhere. Miro provides an engaging, intuitive experience with multiple options for real-time collaboration and asynchronous teamwork on an online whiteboard. It is an infinite canvas that helps you ideate, strategize, get organized, and work with your team.

Miro's infinite canvas gives you the freedom to choose how you work with your team. Whether you're hosting a digital brainstorm, documenting a meeting, teaching a class, or managing an Agile workflow, the possibilities for using our digital whiteboard are endless.

7.3 Howspace

Howspace (<https://www.howspace.com/>) is an all-in-one digital facilitation platform specifically designed for facilitator-led workshops and events. Howspace is an AI-powered digital facilitation tool made specifically for facilitator-led workshops and events that thrive on high levels of involvement and collaboration.

Use Howspace before a workshop or event starts, to help participants get familiar with the objectives or to gain an understanding of the participants' current goals and skill levels. Once an event is kicked off, you can create discussions and activities to extend and reinforce the impact. Howspace makes it easy to track feedback and engagement instantly and over time.

Howspace is especially effective for events and workshops that rely on heavy participation and peer-to-peer learning. Some examples of typical events that Howspace is being used for: professional learning sessions, change management, transformation processes, organizational development, HR, and membership events with a learning and involvement focus.

Howspace has the capability to host video meetings up to 50 participants within the platform with no additional tools. You can also compliment with any live video tool of your choice. With Howspace, you can facilitate real-time chat conversations, polls, surveys, or other activities that are permanently documented in your Howspace workspace and are easy to refer back to.

7.4 Mentimeter

Mentimeter (<https://www.mentimeter.com/>) can be used for easy-to-build presentations, interactive Polls, Quizzes, and Word Clouds. Some characteristics:

- Build interactive presentations with the easy-to-use online editor. Add questions, polls, quizzes, slides, images, gifs and more to your presentation to create fun and engaging presentations.
- Your audience uses their smartphones to connect to the presentation where they can answer questions. Visualize their responses in real-time to create a fun and interactive experience.

- Once your Mentimeter presentation is over, share and export your results for further analysis and even compare data over time to measure the progress of your audience.

Key features are:

- Build beautiful interactive presentations in the presentation builder.
- Collect polls, data and opinions from participants using smart devices.
- Get insights on participants with trends and data export.

7.5 Slido

Slido (www.sli.do) is go-to interaction application for hybrid meetings. Empower your audience to ask questions, vote in polls and be a part of the discussion by using a simple Q&A and polling tool. Make your meetings and events more interactive by polling your audience in real time. Live polls are an easy way to kick-start the conversation, check knowledge or get instant feedback. Let everyone in the audience ask their questions and vote for the ones they like the most.

Slido will help you prioritize the discussion topics for all-hands meetings, Ask Me Anything sessions or Q&As after presentations. Design a fun quiz that fits your presentation, training or class theme. You can use it to break the ice, recap the content, entertain or test the attendees. Collect and curate the best ideas from your participants, whether you're deciding on team projects or summarizing the key learnings from your workshop.

7.6 Kahoot

Millions of teachers and students unleash the magic of learning with Kahoot! (<https://kahoot.com/>). Creating a learning game of Kahoot! only takes minutes. A kahoot can be created from scratch by using question bank to mix and match existing questions, edit a template, or customize existing kahoots created by other users. It can be hosted live in class or via a video conferencing tool to connect students virtually. Questions and answers are displayed on a shared screen while students answer on their devices but you can choose to display questions on their devices, too. In assigned student-paced kahoots, questions and answers are displayed on players' screens and you can turn the timer off. Assign them as part of distance learning or for review and formative assessment in class. Now you can assign kahoots directly in Microsoft Teams. It can be shared with students to engage them after class, for example, directly in Microsoft Teams.