

ENLIGHT IMPACT AWARDS 2026 Call for Nominations

ANNEX 3 – Impact, Impact Pathways and Impact Assessment

IMPACT

In ENLIGHT we understand **IMPACT** as the **effects or changes** we can see (demonstrate, measure, capture), **within**¹ and **beyond**² academia which happen because of an activity or intervention in the higher education environment (caused by, attributable to, contributed to). Impact is intrinsically linked to **transformation** and to transformative initiatives, programmes, projects, or activities.

Impact is about change, transformation and the difference(s) made; not the process (activities such as outreach, communication, dissemination, or societal engagement).

Impact is usually described in terms of reach and significance:

- **Reach** pertains to the extent, spread, breath, and diversity of the affected stakeholders. It focuses on how widespread and diverse the impact is.
- **Significance** refers to the importance or value of the impact to each affected stakeholder. It assesses how the impact has enhanced, influenced, informed or transformed institutions, policies, practices, products, services, culture, understanding, awareness, or wellbeing of the stakeholders.

For more information, please consult this [page](#).

IMPACT PATHWAYS

There are multiple pathways through which a Higher Education initiative can lead to impact. It all depends on the type of activity(ies) undertaken, the knowledge field, the stakeholders involved in and potentially affected by the initiative, the characteristics of the initiative itself and the context in which it is implemented.

There are also different ways of describing an initiative's pathway to impact; and the clarification below does not need to be used as a template for the Impact Awards application. It only provides insight into some of the frameworks in use within the ENLIGHT context.

In ENLIGHT, regardless of the type and scale of the initiative under consideration, we use a Theory of Change logic model to describe the different stages through which an initiative can generate impact. More specifically, the Theory of Change framework distinguishes five key stages along the pathway to impact:

- **Inputs (what you need):** *all the resources necessary for the initiative to be developed* (e.g. funding resources, staff, time, supporting services, infrastructures, equipment).
- **Activities (what you do):** *the actions carried out by the team during the initiative period* (e.g. education, research and/or service to society activities, such as organising a course, a workshop, or exchange programme, undertaking bibliography review, experiments or interviews, carrying out communication and dissemination actions, preparing project proposals, or rolling out citizen science activities).

¹ Within: on learners, academics (teachers & researchers), non-academic staff, management, Higher Education Institutions (processes, structures, etc.).

² Beyond: on society, economy, environment, culture, regional ecosystems, etc.

- **Outputs (the products):** *the tangible products that derive directly from the activities (e.g. guidelines, new tools and prototypes, policy recommendations, new courses and programmes, scientific publications, patents, new projects).*
- **Outcomes (expected):** *the awareness, use, and value perceived of the outputs; they are attributed to the initiative; they generally occur in the short- to medium-term (e.g. improved skills set, raised awareness, increased collaborations, enhanced visibility and recognition, opening of new research lines, new business opportunities).*
- **Impacts (intended):** *changes brought about as direct or indirect results from outputs and outcomes; they refer to the contribution of the initiative within and beyond academia; typically, impact occurs in the long-term (e.g. contribution to climate change mitigation, to digitalisation of services, or equitable quality of life, to the improvement of future-proof skills and competencies).*

For more information, please consult this [page](#).

IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Impact assessment refers to the process of identifying, capturing and evaluating an initiative's effects, and the extent of those effects on different stakeholders over time. You may need to report back to your funder on the initiative's progress towards its impact goals; you may wish to develop an Impact Case Study to articulate and evidence the significance and reach of the impact(s) arising from the initiative; or you may want to better understand the effects you are generating in order to maximise positive changes and mitigate unintended or undesirable ones. In all cases, considering impact from the early planning stages will help you identify the indicators to be monitored and the tools required to collect the necessary quantitative and qualitative evidence. This, in turn, will enable you to analyse, assess, communicate, and manage the resulting findings.

For more information, we recommend consulting the ENLIGHT Methodology and Toolkit for Impact Assessment [here](#).