

Strategic Management with Performance-Based Budgeting for Impact-Driven Applied Research: Tools and lessons from IMAP4U

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Applied research at Universities of Applied Sciences (UAS) plays an increasingly strategic role in addressing societal challenges, strengthening regional innovation ecosystems, and enhancing Europe's competitiveness. However, many UAS face difficulties in aligning institutional strategies, governance structures, and budgeting models with the requirements of impact-driven research and innovation. This session presents a practical framework derived from the IMAP4U project, adapted to support higher education leaders and policy-makers in improving strategic governance, resource planning, and demand-driven prioritisation of applied research.

The workshop will demonstrate how methodologies developed within the IMAP4U project—such as strategic prioritisation through challenge-based learning, digitalised data-driven governance, applied-research-specific performance reporting, and evidence-based decision-making tools—can be repurposed to strengthen strategic and financial management in UAS. Participants will explore how institutions can prioritise applied research strategies, align research outputs with current and future needs of industry and the public sector, and implement performance-based budgeting models that reinforce innovation and societal impact.

The session directly addresses the conference theme “Impact, Industry, Society: Demand-driven research and innovation for a competitive Europe” by focusing on the institutional conditions required for effective applied research. It will examine how UAS can:

- prioritise research domains aligned with regional and societal needs;
- channel resources into demand-driven innovation projects;
- operationalise the quadruple-helix model through targeted budgeting and stakeholder engagement;
- ensure transparency through data-driven and performance-based decision-making at leadership and policy levels.

This 45-minute interactive breakout session will actively engage participants through short exercises, peer exchange, and scenario-based modelling. Participants will access the IMAP4U online digital platform to practice strategic prioritisation by defining KPIs using sample datasets. Step by step, they will experience how the IMAP4U system links strategic priorities to performance reports and ultimately connects them to performance-based budgeting mechanisms within a hypothetical

University of Applied Sciences. Through this hands-on exercise, participants will strengthen their understanding of how demand-driven research and innovation can be strategically managed to enhance European competitiveness.

Note: Sample datasets and Excel-based exercise materials will be provided as part of the session.