VIRTUAL SUMMIT
ON IMPACT

What is the best way to measure the impact of a programme or project? How and when is impact best measured? What are the best practices? What is the impact of different measurement strategies themselves? Can new applications of technology improve impact measurement?

The Virtual Summit on Impact 2020 brought together more than 30 speakers over 4 days and 8 sessions to build a common framework for assessing, understanding and maximizing impact.

HIGHLIGHTS I DAY 4
Designing long-term strategies to promote impactful research
on pressing global challenges

The final day began with a panel on **action based research activities in migration**. Speakers included senior representatives from universities, the European Commission, NGOs, and intergovernamental organizations based in Europe, North Africa and US. The panel was moderated by **Hal Plotkin**, who noted that migration is an urgent challenge facing European countries and the U.S. with significant political and economic implications.

In Europe, action-based research is prioritized by the future research funding framework (Horizon Europe) that relies on an oriented-impact logic, noted **Luca Lixi**, European Commission. In this context, research on migration is often most constructive when it helps move public perception from fear to understanding of migrants and their overall economic impact on regional conditions. The importance of working with scholars, employing a strong dissemination strategy and sharing findings with the general public, were emphasized by **Claudia Natali**, International Organization for Migration.

Universities are expected today to be not just the producer of isolated scientific knowledge but the actors of social responsability and the key players for tackling urgent global issues, noted **Marcello Scalisi**, UNIMED, who sees increased need to support such endeavors.

Through capacity building initiatives, scholars can share their knowledge with all the other actors of social change, including teachers, social workers, and police, and other segments of society who can influence the public perception, said **Andras Kovats**, Menedék/Hungarian Association for Migrants. The more scholars create a large partners' network including individuals and migrants themselves, the more they can maximize the impact of their research on public perception of migration.

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The second Panel of the day focused on the **methodologies of research impact assessment**, likewise moderated by **Hal Plotkin**.

The panelists agreed that before defining the method to measure impact, one must take into consideration the context and the stakeholders. More than one method should be used, a "triangulation" method using multiple measures can even be considered, with a commitment to avoiding letting the most readily available indicators limit the scope of research impact assessment, according to **Paula Adam**, AQuaAs.

Research impact assessment should be framed, by defining targets and goals was another clear area of agreement among the panelists. For grantmakers, it is particularly important to embed the connection between research impact assessment and the expectations they have when designing a program. Scholars have made a strong effort in the past few years in trying adapt their research to be more impactful, but it is not clear that grantmakers are taking full advantage of this opportunity to redesign their programs, notes **Bernardo Rondelli**, SIRIS Academic.

For **Gilles Lhuillier**, ENS, the methodology of impact assessment relies on three different questions: Why are you assessing impact? When should the assessment be done? And: how should the assessment be conducted? Ethics, transparency, and other rules must be clearly defined and can find examples in legal tools already in widespread use.

The difficulty of the assessment exercise relies on the fact that donors do not always know what the impact of the projects they fund is. Timescales are different and the funding often ends before research outcomes are fully visible in society, notes **Valentina Amorese**, Cariplo Foundation.

The panelists also assessed the question of how the COVID crisis contributed to more rapid funding cycles during which impact assessment may suffer unless more clearly included in grant distribution plans.

After the last round table of the Virtual Meeting, moderator **Hal Plotkin** delivered concluding remarks summarizing the main findings over the previous four days. Plotkin noted the widespread agreement among panelists that accelerating, or even accurately measuring impact is a complex undertaking that would benefit from increased collaborative efforts, including the development of shared methodologies based on open data. He noted the agreement that service delivery lends itself to relatively easy to identify evaluation methodologies which are more difficult to find in the case of policy advocacy where the link between effects and causes is often not clear. Plotkin commended the organizers of the Virtual Summit on Impact for the originality of its approach, which brought together experts from Lebanon, Egypt, Jordan, Europe, and the United States. Thanks to the live broadcast speakers could answer to questions raised by a worldwide audience. By bringing together people of good will the summit illuminated opportunities to make more effective use of Internet-based tools for collaboration and communication. In his view, the lockdown resulting from the pandemic has highlighted the role of the Internet in two dimensions, the way it is used to spread fear, misinformation, nationalism, and xenophobia, emotions that draw reliable crowds and the profits associated with them, even at the expense of more important social concerns. The more constructive use of the Internet is evidenced by events such as the Virtual Summit on Impact, which he observed as revealing the Internet's still underused power to promote communication and understanding across borders and cultures, collaboration, and mutually beneficial progress. Plotkin concluded the Virtual Summit by announcing news that the organizers of the summit plan to make it an annual event, and also envisage the creation of a "Virtual Summit on Impact Platform" to provide

ongoing support to an organized community of donors, researchers and social stakeholders.

More information on
https://virtual-summit-on-impact.canalchat.fr/