



# DIGIFABS

Digital Change Agents for Food + Beverage SMEs



**ABOUT DIGIFABS**

**KICK OFF**

**F&B SKILLS**

**LEAD PARTNER**

**CONSORTIUM  
PARTNER**

**PARTNER  
OVERVIEW**

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01

PAGE 3

## About DIGIFABS

## Two-Day Kick Off

By Denise Callan, Momentum

02

PAGE 4



03

PAGE 6

## F&B Skills Needed

By Dominik Lappenküper & Judith Helmer, FH Münster

## Research Update

By Mike Russell, AUAS

04

PAGE 7



05

PAGE 8

## Meet Our Lead Partner FH Münster

By Dominik Lappenküper & Judith Helmer, FH Münster

## Meet Our Consortium Partner Preneurz

By Joost Reimert & Ellen Spithoven, Preneurz

06

PAGE 9



07

PAGE 10

## Partner Overview

# ABOUT DIGIFABS

## €1.5M Erasmus+ Project to Boost Digital Transformation in Europe's Food & Beverage SMEs

DIGIFABS, a new €1.5 million Erasmus+ project, has launched to help food and beverage (F&B) SMEs across Europe navigate digital transformation. The 3-year initiative brings together 14 partners from academia, industry, and network organisations in 7 countries to train students, educators, and SME employees as Responsible Dynamic Digital Change Agents. The partners are Consorci de la Ribera (Spain), Stichting Hogeschool van Amsterdam (The Netherlands), University Innovation Industry Network (The Netherlands), Slovenska Polnohospodarska Univerzita V Nitre (Slovakia), National University of

Ireland Maynooth, (Ireland), Univewersytet Szczecinski (Poland), Momentum (Ireland), BIA Innovator Campus (Ireland), WestMBH (Germany), Preneurz (The Netherlands), Federation Of Associations Of Scientifically Technical Notes Council Of The Zachodniopomorski Region In Szczecin (Poland), New EDU Co ( Slovakia ), and ECECT (Cyprus).

Through multidisciplinary summer schools, SME challenges, and bootcamps, DIGIFABS will equip participants with the digital, resilience, and innovation skills needed to drive technology adoption in F&B SMEs. The project aims to engage 100+ students, 10+ scientists, and 15+ SMEs in its pilot phase, with insights informing the development of publicly available educational resources.

By fostering collaboration between higher education and industry, DIGIFABS seeks to uplift the digital transformation capacity of Europe's vital F&B sector. Learn more at <https://digifabs.eu/>



# TWO-DAY KICK-OFF

At Münster FH

## DIGIFABS Project Launches to Drive Digital Transformation in Europe's Food & Beverage SMEs

The DIGIFABS Digital Change Agents for Food and Beverage SMEs project kicked off on February 19th, 2024, with a two-day launch event in Münster, Germany. Coordinated by FH Münster University of Applied Skills, this three-year project brings together 14 partners from 7 European countries to optimise digital transformation in food and beverage (F&B) small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

At the launch event, participants thoroughly reviewed the project plan, clarifying responsibilities and addressing questions. The consortium partners had the opportunity to get better acquainted and discuss how to collectively achieve the project's objectives. Team roles were sharpened, and any ambiguities were resolved.



Key activities of DIGIFABS will include:

1. A multidisciplinary action learning summer school and challenge for students
2. Bootcamps for educators and F&B SMEs to facilitate regional DIGIFABS challenges
3. Development of publicly available materials, including introductory MOOCs

The project aims to foster university-industry relationships, introduce new pedagogical approaches, and create innovative educational experiences in digital food production. DIGIFABS also aspires to establish a European Network of DIGIFABS Hubs that will continue beyond the project's completion.

Momentum, one of the project partners, is responsible for Quality Assurance and Dissemination. Their team members, Denise and Paula, contributed to the launch meeting both in-person and online, presenting on these aspects and facilitating a workshop. Additionally, Joost and Ellen from Preneurz are responsible for developing the dissemination strategy for the project.

As DIGIFABS begins, the consortium is poised to empower Europe's F&B SMEs to embrace the opportunities of the digital age, driving innovation and competitiveness in this vital sector.

- Denise Callan, Momentum



# F&B SKILLS NEEDED

## Mind the Gap: Addressing the Digital Skills Shortage in Europe's F&B SMEs

Europe's food and beverage (F&B) industry, dominated by SMEs, lags behind other sectors in digital transformation. A skills gap is a key barrier, with companies struggling to recruit talent in areas like IT, software development, and data analytics.

To drive sustainable digitalisation, the F&B workforce needs a new skill set, combining technical skills with problem-solving, self-management, and leadership abilities. Continuous upskilling is also crucial to adapt to technological changes and new working practices.

Bridging the digital skills gap is not just about technology; it's about investing in human capital. By cultivating resilient, purpose-driven digital change agents, we can secure the future of Europe's F&B industry. The time to act is now.



## Investigating Digital Skills and Maturity Models for F&B SMEs

DIGIFABS aims to promote digital, resilience, and innovation skills to optimize digital transformation management in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the F&B processing sector.

Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences (AUAS) is currently leading the crucial "Investigation" phase. This foundational stage focuses on understanding responsible digital dynamic skill sets and exploring maturity models and skills development stages for companies in the F&B sector.

Significant progress has been made:

1. Partners have reviewed over 50 academic articles and reports on maturity models, identifying key themes;
2. More than 60 articles relating to dynamic digital skills have been analyzed;
3. A set of interview questions has been developed to engage 50 SMEs in partner countries and document 20 best practice business cases.

These achievements lay a solid foundation for the next steps. The project team now plans to identify and engage both educators and SMEs to validate the research findings. This careful groundwork in the investigation phase will serve as the cornerstone for the

remaining implementation Work Packages, ensuring that subsequent activities are well-informed and targeted.

Findings from the upcoming interviews and case studies will inform a summer school and bootcamps scheduled for later in the project, further advancing DIGIFABS' goal of promoting digital transformation in F&B SMEs.

- Mike Russell, AUAS



# MEET OUR LEAD PARTNER FH MÜNSTER

## FH Münster

The DIGIFABS project is being led and coordinated by Science-to-Business Marketing Research Center (S2BMRC). The S2BMRC is an integral part of the Münster School of Business at FH Münster University of Applied Sciences in Germany. Acting globally, the S2BMRC is a world-leading centre dedicated to interactions between Science and Business + Science and Society. The centre has more than 30 team members and researchers and has profound knowledge and expertise in developing models and tools for digital transformation, technology transfer, innovation, entrepreneurship, and university-business-society cooperation.

The FH Münster University of Applied Sciences (FH Münster), founded in 1971 is a modern, achievement-oriented university highly respected across Europe. With more than 15,000 students, it is one of the most significant and prominent institutions of its kind in Germany. Its more than 1,200 staff members, including more than 290 teaching staff and over 100 courses of study, provide its students with a wide range of high-quality education, greatly benefiting the local and national economy. With a multidisciplinary approach, it qualifies people for life in the global market. It imparts an adaptive understanding of the changing world, especially regarding societal and technological changes and challenges and a practice-oriented curriculum.



## FH Münster involvement in DIGIFABS

FH Münster is leading the DIGIFABS consortium and formally represents the alliance in front of the EACEA. As a project leader, they take the overall management, legal and financial responsibility for the project activities and deliverables with the support of their respective work package leaders. The team working on DIGIFABS at FH Münster consists of Prof. Dr. Thorsten Kliewe, Judith Helmer, and Dominik Lappenküper. Thorsten is the Managing Director of the Science-to-Business Marketing Research Centre and Professor of Innovation Management and Business Development. Judith and Dominik are both Research Associates and PhD Candidates. All three have worked on previous research projects in the field of digital transformation, innovation, and university-business collaboration and bring enthusiasm and insights to the consortium. Thorsten Kliewe will take the role of manager in DigiFABS, Judith Helmer will be involved as researcher, and Dominik Lappenküper will be active as project coordinator.



**FH MÜNSTER**  
University of Applied Sciences

# MEET OUR CONSORTIUM PARTNERS

## PRENEURZ

### Driving Digital Innovation in DIGIFABS and Beyond

Preneurz, a key DIGIFABS partner, specialises in fostering entrepreneurship, collaboration, and innovation by connecting educational institutions, SMEs, startups, and established companies. With a proven track record of engaging 55 universities, over 3,100 students, 280+ teachers, and more than 1,900 entrepreneurs, Preneurz excels at transforming educational institutions into dynamic entrepreneurial hubs.

In DIGIFABS, Preneurz focuses on building entrepreneurial ecosystems by linking knowledge institutions with local businesses, facilitating the real-world application of cutting-edge digital transformation theories. Their approach involves collaborating with local teams to catalyse organisational culture shifts, drawing from their extensive experience in the Dutch ecosystem.

A cornerstone of Preneurz's strategy is their SME digital workspace initiative. This innovative program utilises digital workspaces to connect students directly with companies, offering practical case studies and real-world experience in digital transformation. Through this platform, students gain hands-on experience while businesses benefit from fresh perspectives and innovative solutions to their digital challenges.

Crucially, Preneurz brings to DIGIFABS an extensive network of entrepreneurs and SMEs. This network is instrumental in reaching out to businesses that might be interested in participating in the project's research and initiatives. By leveraging these connections, Preneurz helps ensure that DIGIFABS can engage with a diverse range of food and beverage SMEs, enhancing the project's impact and relevance.

By broadening perspectives, guiding collaboration, and sharing their expert network, Preneurz drives innovation in various sectors, with a particular focus on the digital transformation of the food and beverage industry. Their involvement in DIGIFABS promises to create lasting impact through strategic partnerships, ecosystem development, and the practical application of digital solutions in SMEs.



**Joost Reimert**



**Ellen Spithoven**





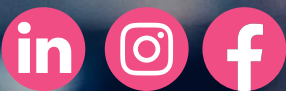
# PARTNER OVERVIEW

Our partnership consists of **14 organisations** from **7 countries**, each bringing each bringing unique experience, expertise and skills to the project. Click the logo to reach the Partner page at the DIGIFABS website.





Follow Our Journey



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