



Can AI Replace Us as Impact Specialists?

Insights From Building an Interactive Impact Chatbot
at University of Oulu

Tutkimuspalvelupäivät 2025, Tampere
Sanna Uusitalo, Kirsi Ojutkangas, Elina Rossi



Contents

- **Background and motivation for an AI-powered impact planner**
- **Design and development of the impact chat bot**
- **Feedback from funding and impact specialists**
- **Demo**
- **Future plans**





Background and motivation for an AI-powered impact planner

- **User-Friendly, Tailored Guidance:** Instead of static tools like our Impact Helper and Planner, chatbots offer interactive call-specific support.
- **Instant, Scalable Support:** Chatbots give real-time answers based on expert-defined guidance and can assist many users at once.
- **Pilot Opportunity:** We had a chance to test chatbots thanks to university support, access to Copilot Studio, ICT training, and collaboration with impact specialists interested in AI.



Development of the Impact Chatbot :


**We created a simplified version
and more advanced version**



Copilot Studio:

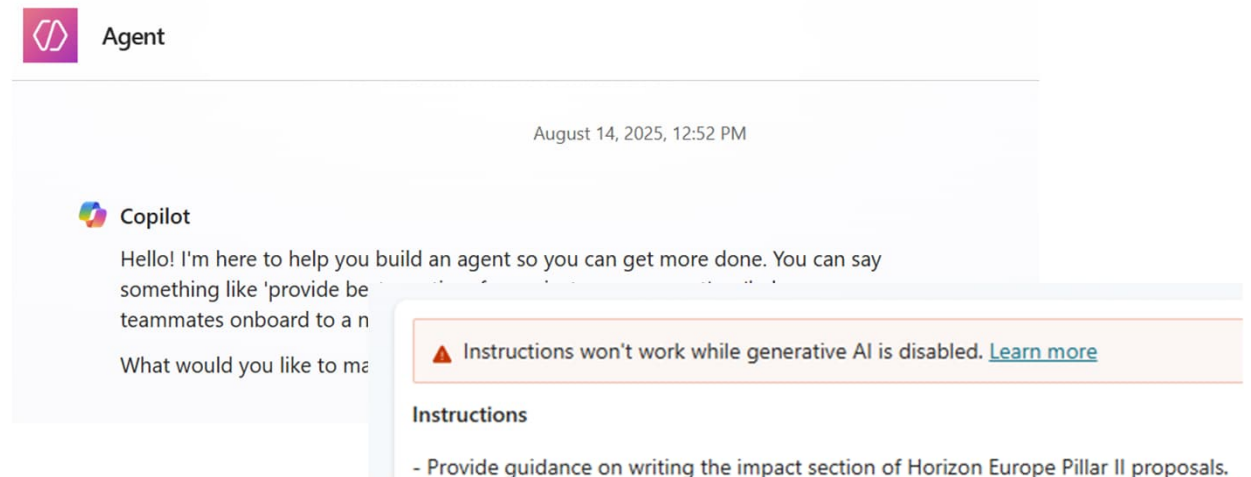
- **Copilot Studio chatbots** can be embedded to websites, Teams, Facebook, Slack, and email.
- **Developer can control what material** the chatbot will use, when providing responses.
- **Developers have more coding flexibility** than with M365 chatbots. The bot can be interactive in controlled manner.
- **End users don't need a license** to use the chatbot.
- **Pricing:** Microsoft offers a free quota of chatbot responses. After that, each response costs (e.g., 2 cents).
- **Demo access:** You'll get access to test our demo chatbot during the conference, but it will be closed after the conference due to usage costs.

The screenshot shows the Copilot Studio web interface. On the left is a sidebar with navigation icons for Home, Create, Agents, Flows, and Tools. The main area has a header 'Describe your agent to create it' with three buttons: 'Helpdesk', 'Expense tracking', and 'HR and benefits'. Below these is a text input field with the placeholder 'Use everyday words to describe what your agent should do'. A green banner below the input field states: 'Features labeled as 'preview' are subject to supplemental terms. [See terms.](#)'. At the bottom, there is a 'Recent' section with a table of created agents.

Name	Type	Last modified	Last published	Owner	Protection status
 Impact Spotter for Ho...	Agent			# Microsoft C...	1 month ago



Chatbot creation

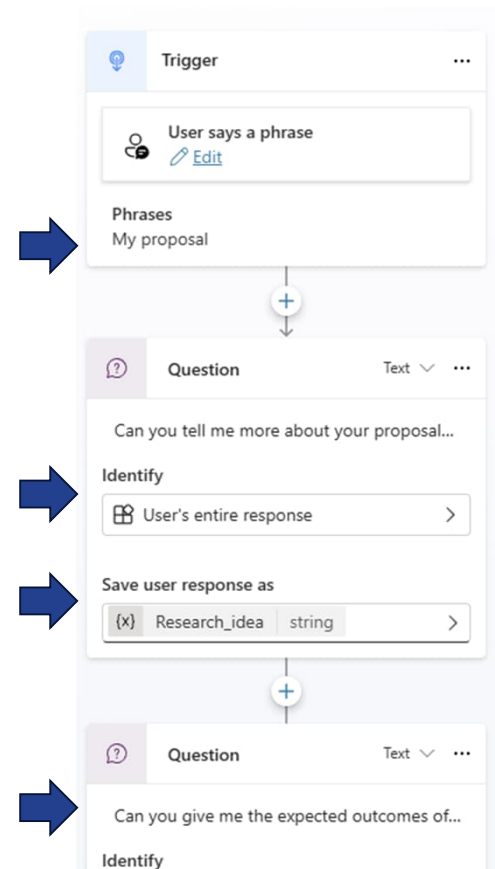


- **Easy Setup:** The setup assistant helps you start by simply describing what you want your chatbot to do.
- **Basic Chatbot:** Just define what the bot does, write description of the bot and instructions for the bot, and link knowledge sources. It offers limited interaction.
- **Advanced Chatbot:** Use Topics to control the logic of your bot and design more interactive responses. Tag knowledge sources and save user responses to improve the bot's logic.



Advanced chatbots: Topics

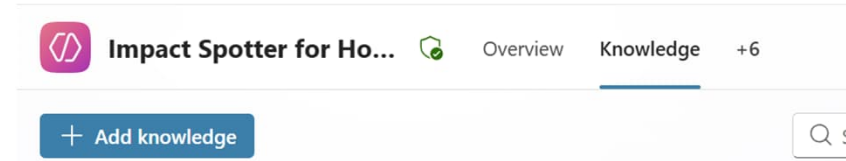
- **Create Triggers:** You can set the bot to react when users mention phrases like “my proposal”.
- **Define Bot Replies:** Pre-set responses like “Can you tell me about your proposal?”
- **Save User Input:** Save user replies as strings so the bot can reuse that information later in the discussion.
- **Build Follow-Up Questions:** Ask targeted questions like “What are the expected outcomes of the Horizon call?”.
- **Enable Interactive Flow:** create structured, multi-step conversations that feels interactive and personalized.





Knowledge sources

- **Add Descriptions:** For each uploaded document, write a short description to help the bot understand what it contains.
- **Mind Copyright:** Uploaded documents are visible to users.
- **Advanced Setup:** You can create a “start page” that explains how the bot should use the documents. Use tags to guide the bot to use sources more effectively.



EXAMPLE DESCRIPTION of knowledge source document:

title: Horizon Europe Proposal Writing Guide

source: Proposal Guide for Coordinators V012025

summary:

This guide provides comprehensive instructions for coordinators preparing Horizon Europe Pillar II proposals (RIA/IA). It covers all sections of the proposal: Excellence, Impact, and Implementation with practical advice, examples, and templates. It aligns with Horizon Europe strategic priorities and evaluation criteria, and includes guidance on SMART objectives, KPIs, impact pathways, dissemination, exploitation, and budgeting.

tags: [Authoritative]

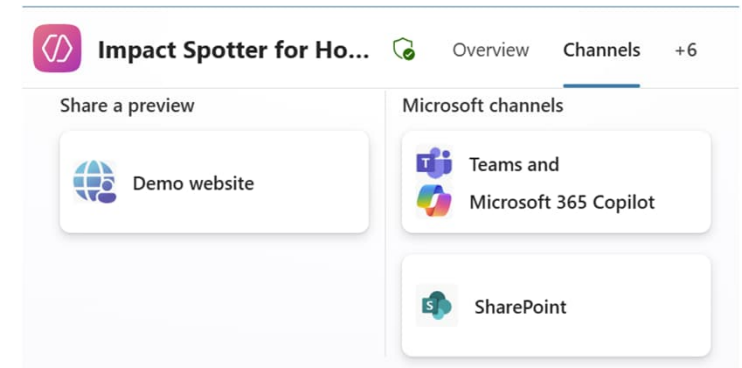
Our DEMO knowledge sources were:

- *UOULU Horizon Europe Proposal Writing Guide*
- *Publication on Theory of Change: “Belcher, B., Halliwell, J. Conceptualizing the elements of research impact: towards semantic standards” (Open access)*



Demo website

- **Fixed Demo Website Layout**
The site design is pre-set and cannot be customized.
- **Welcome message and conversation starters**
You can guide the user with the welcome message and the ready-made prompts
- **Message Length Limit**
Chatbot messages are capped at 2,000 characters, which may limit discussions for complex topics.



Demo Website

You created an agent. Great job! Let's set up a website to share with team members so they can try your agent.

Welcome message

Introduce your agent and its purpose to your team members.

Welcome to UOULU Impact Chatbot!
Important: Start the conversation by clicking Prompt 1 below.
This activates the chatbot.

Conversation starters

Provide some common trigger phrases to help your team members start a conversation with your agent.

1. Can you help me with my proposal?
2. What are the important things to consider in call [expected_outcomes] and [scope]?
3. Make a table of suitable results, outcomes and impact for this [research_topic]? One



Technical challenges I faced

No SharePoint Links:

All materials must be uploaded directly.

Optimize File Use:

Add a start up page and description.

The first bot only ever used one document as a source.

Coding is Tricky:

Learning how topics work and what is possible is challenging.

M365 chatbot helps:

When issues arise, ask chatbot for help. e.g. topics only works if Gen AI is disabled.

Limited Support:

ICT support at UOULU could only help with setup and basic training. I had to learn the rest myself.

Trial-and-Error Process:

The journey was: try → fail → try again → fail again → eventually succeed and learn.



FEEDBACK

from colleagues in-house



*"Ei tämä nyt sysipaska ole!
This isn't pitch-black crap at all!"*

Negatives

- 2000 characters/words are not enough to provide the call expected outcomes and scope texts.
- Use of the current version is not very intuitive
- It would be nice if you were able to use links instead of copy-pasting the call text
- Seems to require some previous know-how
- More instructions on the use are needed
- Small chat window is annoying



Positives:

- With some guidance, easy to use
- The scale and significance sections do not have numbers, but it clearly differentiates between the two, which is very positive.
- The outcomes are defined through the theory of change, which is a good basis for the outcomes section.
- The bot gives quick answers so it could be a good starting point especially if a researcher is "stuck" with their impact

19/08/2025



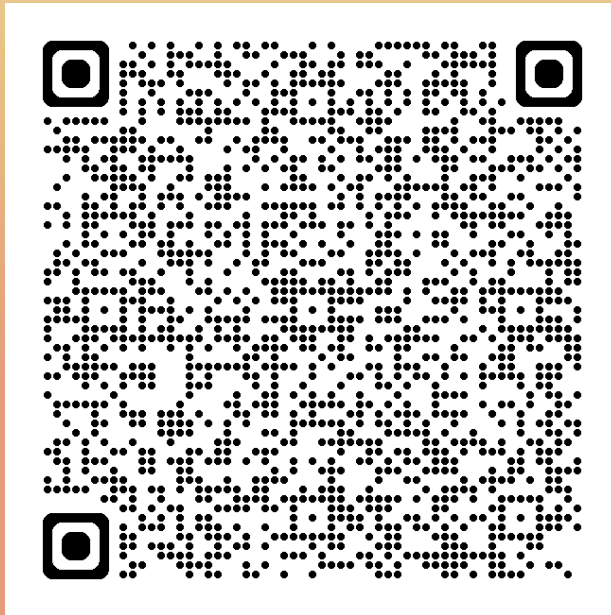


DEMO

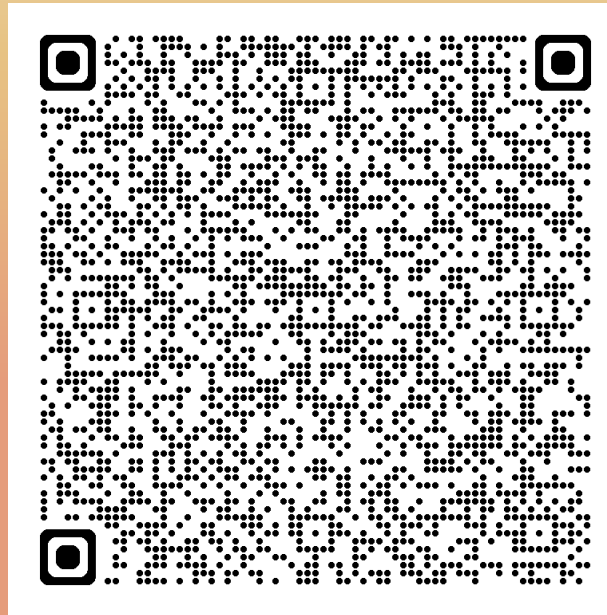


Research topic: Cultural Continuity and Transformation in Virtual Worlds

Open the Impact Chatbot:



Open the call HORIZON-CL2-2025-01-HERITAGE-05 in F&T portal



TIP:
If the camera of your mobile phone does not connect you, try using Google Lens!



**It's your turn to
answer: Can we be
replaced by a chatbot?**





Future plans

- **Include SDGs**
Add Sustainable Development Goals as knowledge source.
- **Expand Knowledge Base**
Add more relevant sources, like scientific articles.
- **Integrate with Intranet**
Embed the chatbot into our Horizon Europe intranet site.