

A. FPGA Basics Manuals

In this practical course, [Field-Programmable Gate Array \(FPGA\)](#) is used as the experimental platform, which means to creation of a hardware description for the [FPGA](#) and writing software for the created hardware. For experiments, toolchain from Altera Corporation is chosen, which are Quartus II for hardware development and the Nios2SBT for software development. The tutorial is specific for Altera toolchain.

A.1. Tool Chain Installation

A.1.1. Installation

Please note that this installation description applies to installing the Altera Design Suite v12 on Windows7 64bit only. To install the toolchain, one can either use the Altera Installer or our pre-downloaded package. Details of the two approaches are show below:

- Altera Installer:

To install all the required software, Altera Corporation provides a free download package on its website, called “Altera Design Suite (Altera Installer)”. This is an installer package, which downloads all selected installation components during the installation process from the Internet. To start the installation, execute the installer package as an administrative user (right-click and select “run as administrator”). This step is very important, as the *USB-Blaster* will not work if you install the software as a low-privileged user.

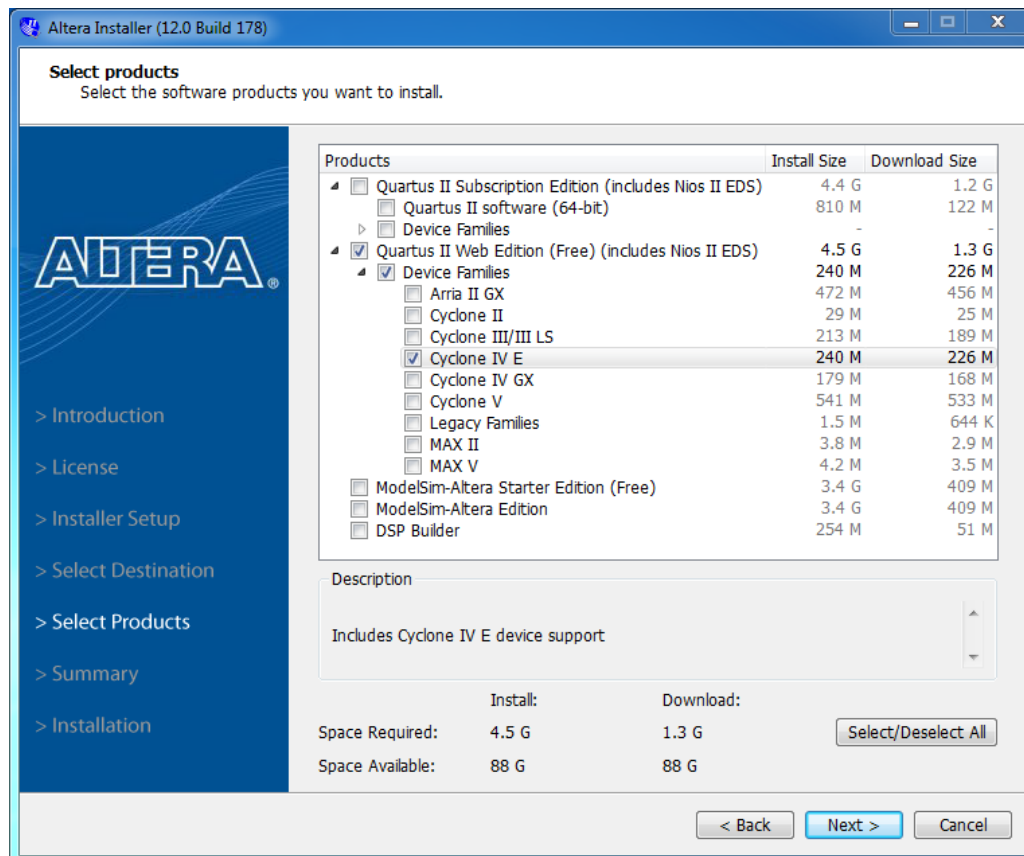


Figure 1: Component selection in the Altera Installer

- Pre-downloaded package:

Go to directory *tools/altera-installation*, double click file *12.1sp1_243-quartus_free_windows.exe*, the installation will start as previously described.

Altera offers a paid (Quartus II Subscription Edition) and a free (Quartus II Web Edition) version of its Quartus development suite. The free version includes most of the features for beginners or even professionals. One striking difference is the missing **Intellectual Property (IP)** license files for several more complex components. These components, which are not fully licensed to free edition users include, but are not limited to NiosII/s or NiosII/f processors (the NiosII/e processor does not require a license), the DDR **Random Access Memory (RAM)** controller or the **Triple Speed Ethernet (TSE)** Ethernet **Media Access Control (MAC)** component.

A.1.2. Tips

1. If running Quartus II v12.0 on a 64bit machine, one might still have difficulties finding the *USB Blaster* hardware in the Programmer tool. Altera does not ship the 64bit JTAG-Server with the QuartusII Web-Edition. To resolve this issue, install the standalone Programmer Software from <https://www.altera.com/download/software/prog-software>, which contains a 64bit Programmer and **Joint Test Action Group (JTAG)**-Server (update: as of Quartus II v12.1, there is no need to separately install the standalone Programmer).
2. The installation package does include the driver for the USB Blaster device. The device driver, however, does not automatically installed during the installation of the Altera toolchain. To install the device drive, go to the "Device Manager" and reinstall the drive, as shown in Fig. 2. When reinstalling the driver, locate the driver at directory: *c:\altera\12.1sp1\quartus\drivers\usb_blaster*.

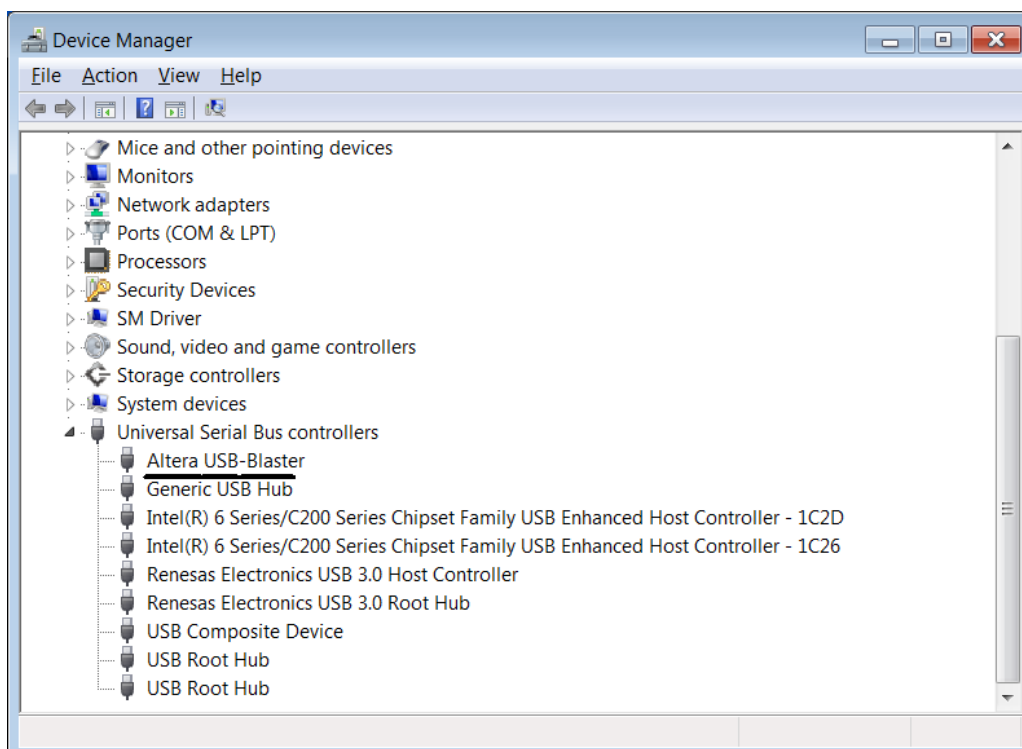


Figure 2: Altera USB Blaster

A.2. Hello-World SoC

A.2.1. Prerequisite

- Successfully finish Section [A.1](#).
- The Hello-World package, which includes the hardware description files, e.g., .sof and .sopinfo, and the software source code.

A.2.2. Download Hardware Design to FPGA

Now that you have created a hardware description for your [FPGA](#) and have successfully generated/compiled it, you can proceed to program your design. Programming your hardware design onto the [FPGA](#) can be done from the console or by using the *Programmer User Interface (UI)*.

Programming the [FPGA](#) chip will keep the hardware description in the chip until the next programming or power loss. This means that the chip has to be programmed again each time the development board is turned off. To avoid reprogramming upon each power cycle, the [FPGA](#) chip can be set to an automatic programming mode. In this mode, the [FPGA](#) will take the hardware description from a flash memory and program itself upon start. But there is a restriction to this automatic programming mode: It can only be used, if all the components used in the current hardware design are properly licensed (e.g., the [TSE Ethernet MAC](#) component is not licensed in Quartus II Web Edition). See section ?? for a short summary of the differences between Quartus versions.

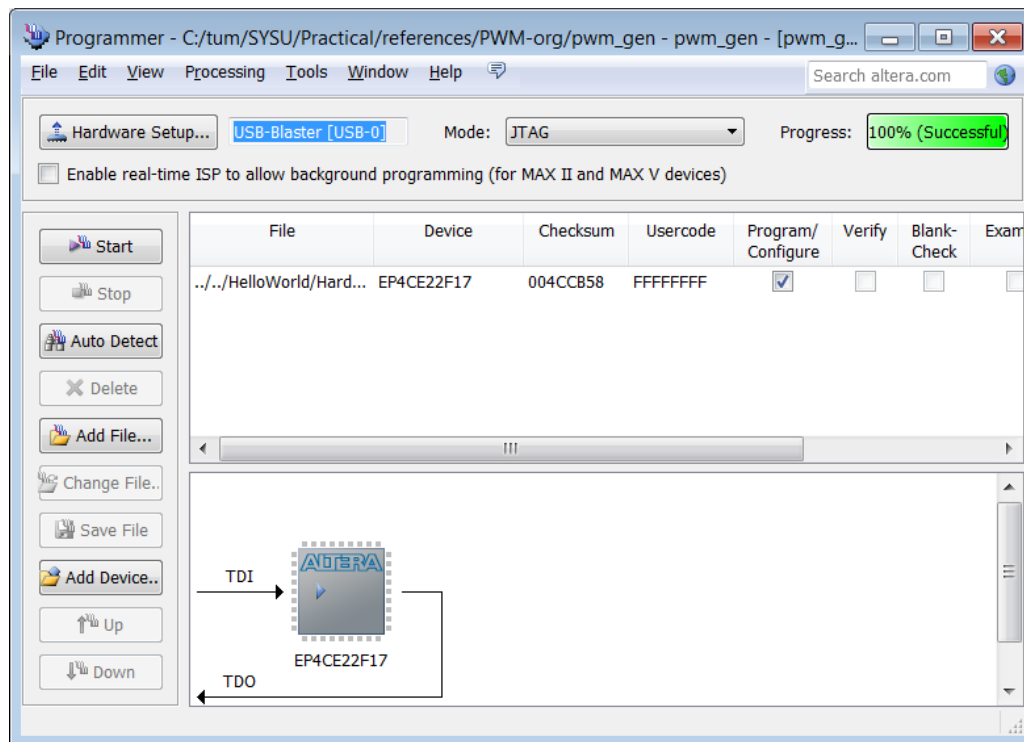


Figure 3: Main window of Programmer

One can start the Programmer manually or even fire it up from your Quartus instance (see figure 3 for a screenshot of the Programmer main window). To do so, open your hardware design project and select “Tools/Programmer” from the menu bar. If you start Programmer from Quartus, the hardware design you want to program should already be preselected. Otherwise, you can use the *Add File...* button to add your *.sof* or *.pof* file. If your [FPGA](#) chip is not

selected yet, you can use the *Add Device...* button to select your FPGA chip. Make sure to select the correct chip number, otherwise you risk damaging your hardware.

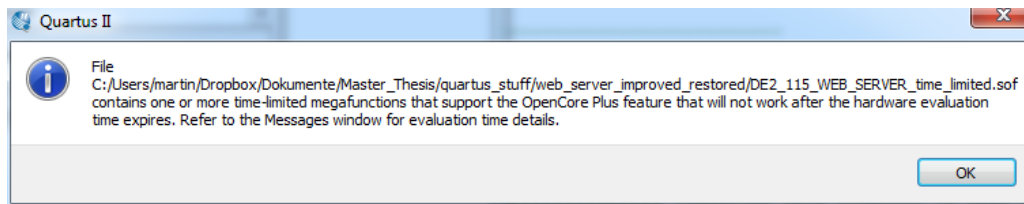


Figure 4: Time limitation warning of Programmer

If you are using a non-licensed component in your hardware design, you can still use that component, but you can only use it while your **FPGA** is connected to your Computer running Programmer. A message will appear, which reminds you of that situation (the message might look like figure 4).

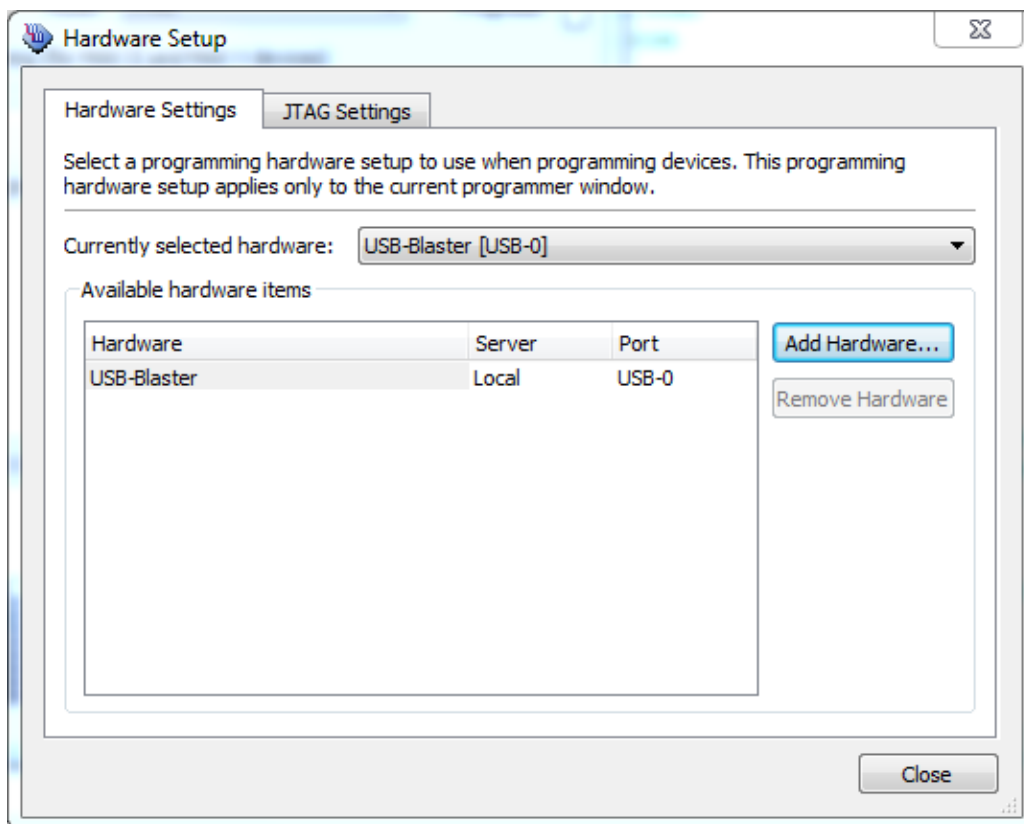


Figure 5: Hardware setup window of Programmer

Now you need to set your *USB Blaster connection* to the **FPGA** chip. Simply click the *Hardware Setup...* button and a window like 5 will pop up. If you are using *USB Blaster* for programming (on DE2-115 boards, you are using *USB Blaster*), your *USB Blaster* will show up in the list of *Available hardware items*. Select it from the *Currently selected hardware* dropdown list, close the Hardware Setup window and you should be ready to start programming. The *Start* button should be enabled, if you have added a *.sof* or *.pof* file, if you have selected a **FPGA** device and if your *USB Blaster* is selected. Start programming by clicking that button. The progress bar should show *Success* after programming finished successfully. This means that your hardware design was programmed onto the **FPGA** chip. If you are using non-licensed (time-limited) components, a popup window will appear after successful programming (see figure 4).

Leave this window open and keep the **FPGA** chip connected to your computer until you have finished using your hardware design.

Sometimes you could have issues with your *USB Blaster* hardware detection. If your *USB Blaster* is not selected (from your previous programming), try to select it again in the *Hardware Setup...* window. If it does not show up in the list of *Available hardware items*, check your physical connection to your development board. Make sure the USB cable is connected properly to your computer and the **FPGA** hardware. Also make sure, that your **FPGA** hardware is connected to a power source and the power switch is turned on. If the USB programmer is still not shown in the list, close the hardware selection window and open it again (you may need to repeat this procedure several times). In fact, simply retrying the failed operation helps in many cases for the Programmer (not only the issues, which are listed here). Another way to get the Programmer working is to select *Auto Detect* or turning your development board off and on again. If your *USB Blaster* did never show up in the list of available hardware components, there might be a driver issue on your system. This could be, because you ran the installation process as a non-privileged user. Also make sure, that your *USB Blaster* is listed in Device Manager (on Windows machines).

Once the download is complete, the *Progress* bar of Programmer window, located at the top-right of Fig. 3, the will indicated *100% (Successful)*.

A.2.3. Setting up the BSP

After finishing all hardware related aspects of this introduction into the DE2-115 **FPGA**, we are ready to start working on the software. Typically, NiosII applications are developed using the Nios2SBT (NiosII Software Build Tools), a modified version of the eclipse **Integrated Development Environment (IDE)**. NiosII applications usually consist of two parts:

- The NiosII **Board Support Package (BSP)**, a software library and runtime environment, which is customized to a **Central Processing Unit (CPU)** and a hardware design.
- The NiosII application, which is the program implementing the functionality required by the user and relying on functions provided by the **BSP**

Start the Nios2SBT and select a workspace if you have not done so yet. To create a new NiosII **BSP**, select “File/New/Nios II Board Support Package”(Fig. 6), which will open the **BSP** creation wizard (see Fig. 7). Choose a name for the **BSP** project and select the path to the *.sopcinfo* file, which has been generated for your NiosII system. The *.sopcfile* should be located in the QuartusII project folder. You can change the location of the **BSP** (be default, it is saved in a subfolder of the QuartusII project folder). Select the **CPU** for which the **BSP** shall be created (in case you have more than one **CPU** in your NiosII system). A **BSP** can only be generated for one **CPU** at once. If you have more **CPUs** in one hardware design, you have to create a **BSP** for each processor. Confirm your selection by pressing the *Finish* button of the **BSP** creation wizard. Your **BSP** project will appear in the *Project Explorer* of the Nios2SBT.

A.2.4. Setting up the application project

Now we are creating the actual NiosII application project, which uses the **BSP**, that we just created. Choose “File/New/Nios II Application” (Fig. 8) to open the *Nios II Application wizard* (see figure 9). Enter a name for your application project and select the **BSP** for your project (the **BSP** that you created in section A.2.3). Create the project by selecting the *Finish* button. The project appears in the *Project Explorer*, as shown in Fig. 10. Basically, we just create two projects, one for the **BSP** and the other for the application.

Note that although the application project has been created, there is no application-specific source code within the project. The next step is to create the application source code. To input

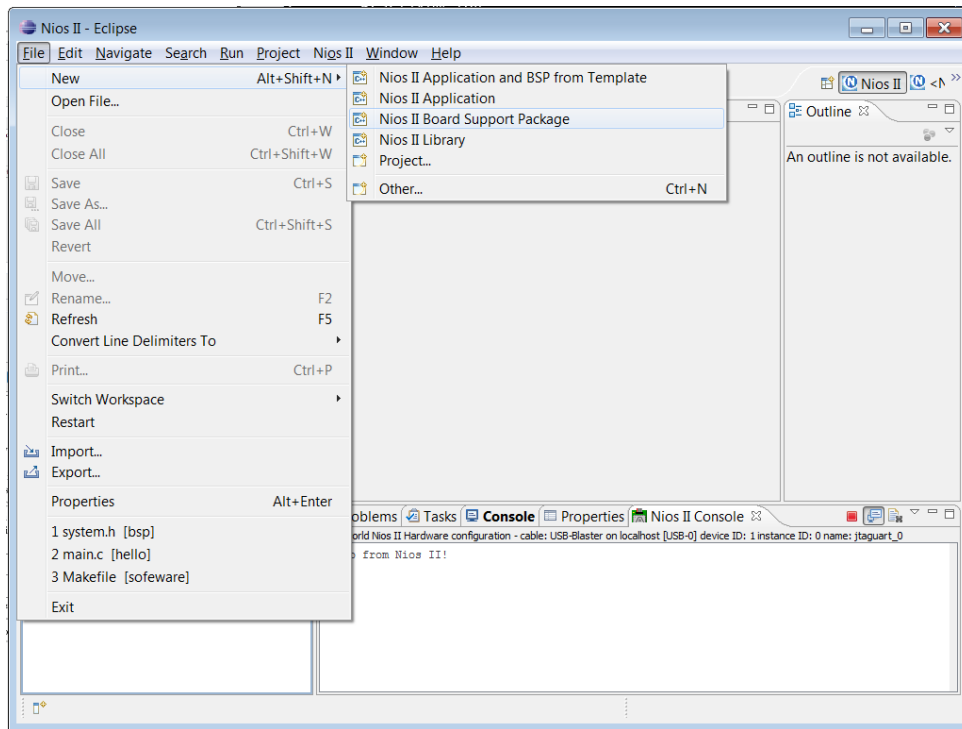


Figure 6: BSP creation wizard Location

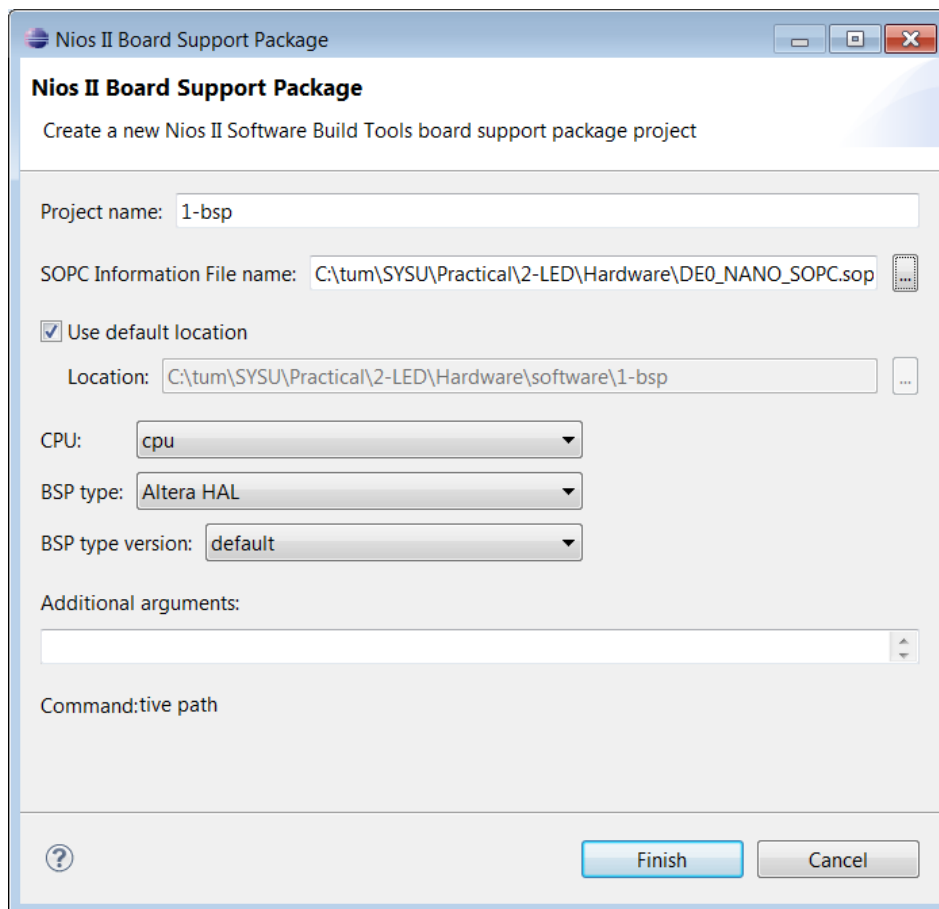


Figure 7: BSP creation wizard

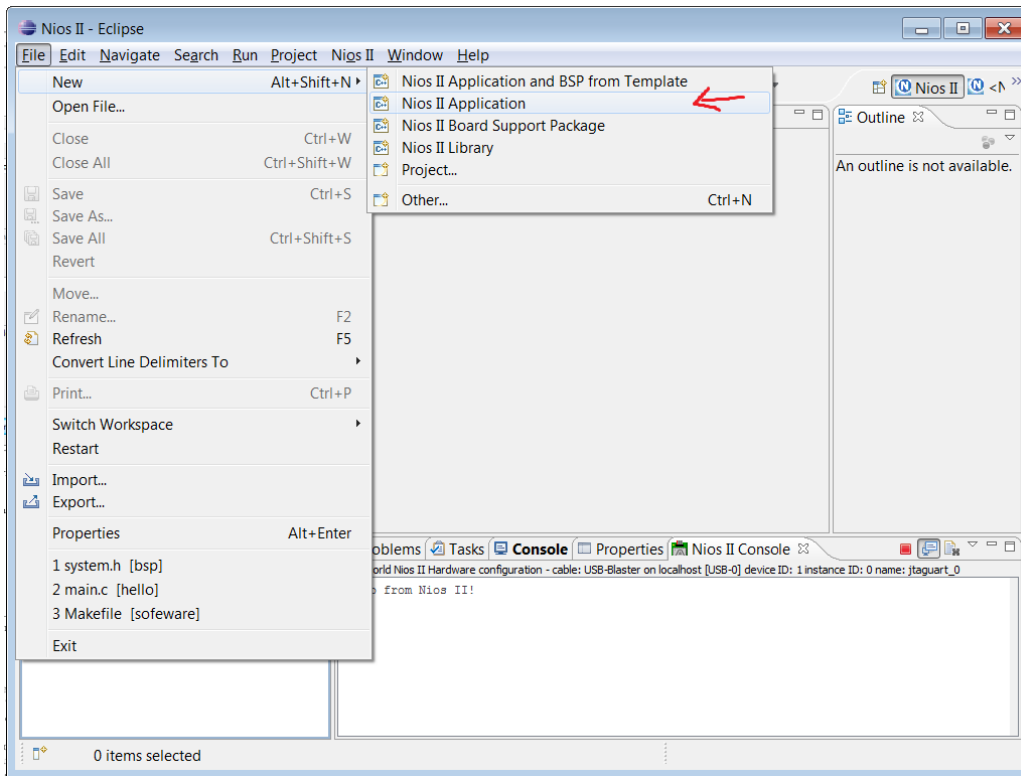


Figure 8: Application creation wizard from Eclipse menu

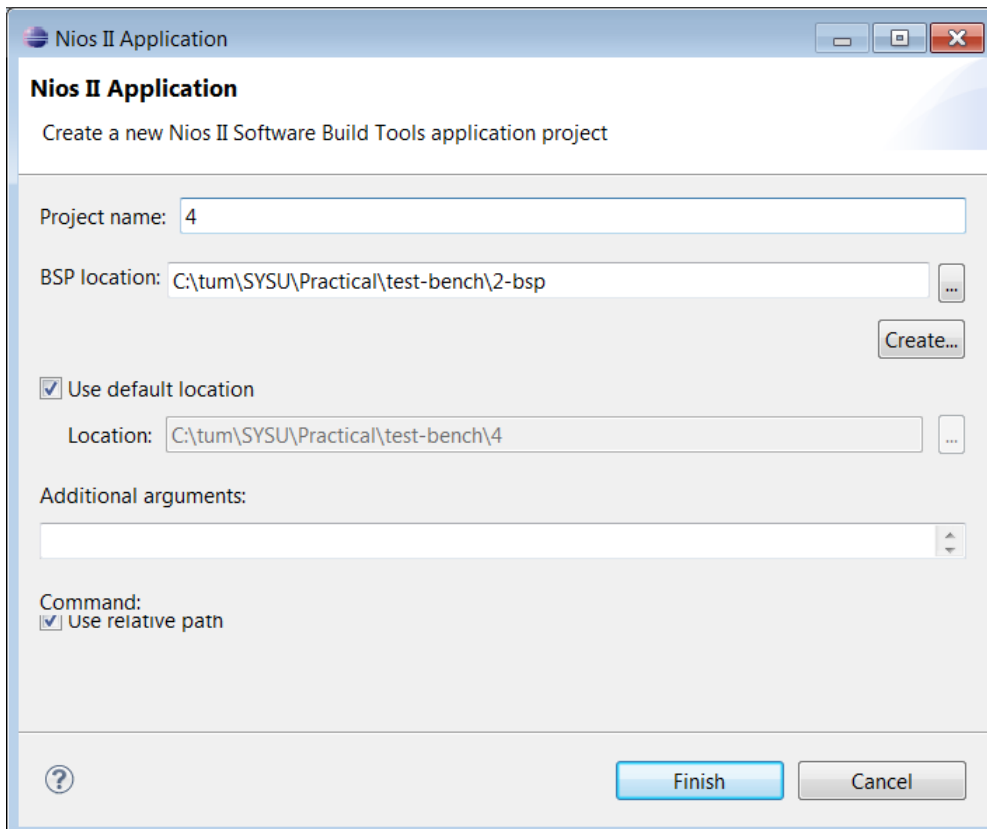


Figure 9: Application creation wizard

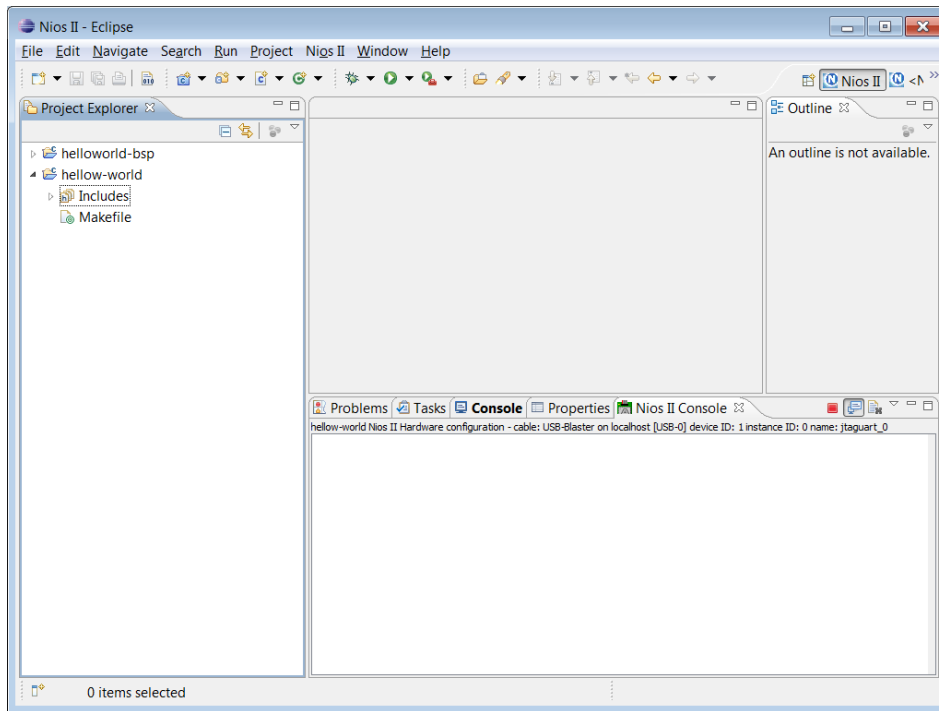


Figure 10: System with BSP and application projects

the application source code into the project, there are two approaches, i.e., using the source-code wizard and manual creation.

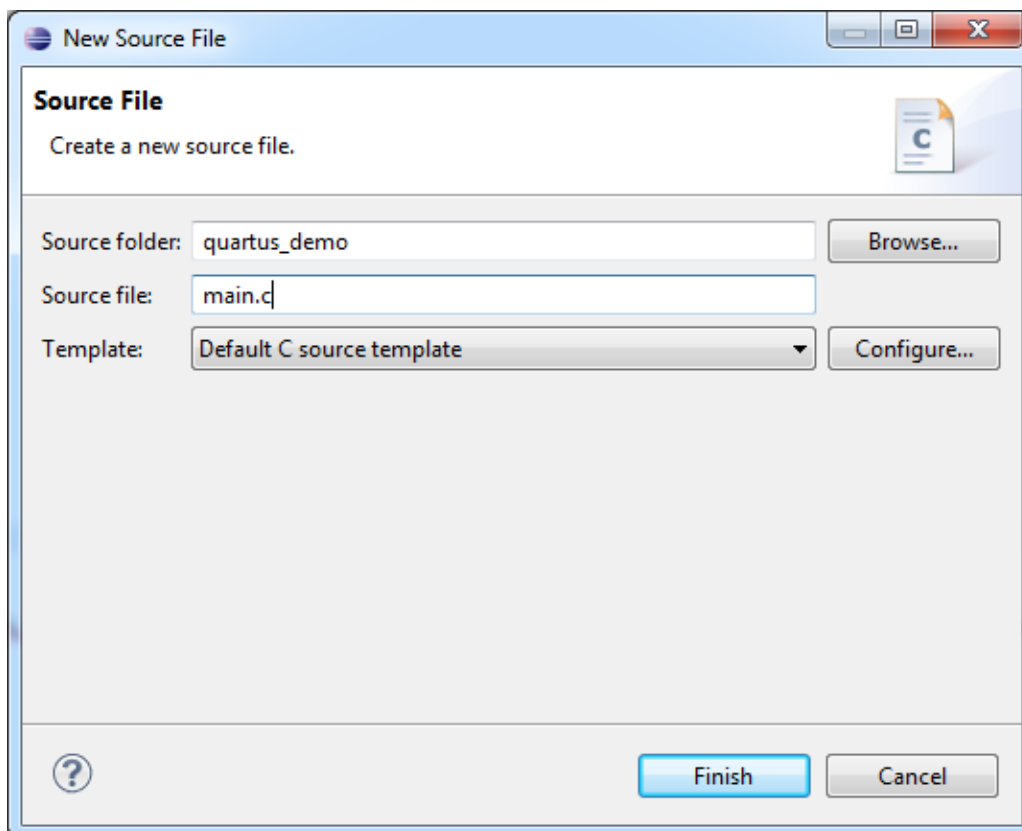


Figure 11: New file wizard

Source-Code Wizard

To add a new source file to the application project, right-click on the application project and select “New/Source File”. In the *New Source File* window (see figure 11), enter a name for the Source File and click *Finish* to create your file. Every project has to contain a main function, which is the entry point to your application. Start by creating this function and adding code to it. Listing 1 shows how a basic main function could look like. It demonstrates the output of text to the console by using:

```
1 printf(“Hello from Nios II!\n”);
```

and controls the LEDs, that we connected via a [Parallel I/O \(PIO\)](#) component by using:

```
1 IOWR_ALTERA_AVALON_PIO_DATA(PIO_LED_BASE, count & 0x01);
```

Congratulations, you created your first NiosII software application.

```
1 #include <stdio.h>
2 #include <system.h>
3 #include "altera_avalon_pio_regs.h"
4
5 int main() {
6     printf("Hello from Nios II!\n");
7     int count = 0;
8     int delay;
9     while (1) {
10        IOWR_ALTERA_AVALON_PIO_DATA(LED_PIO_BASE, count & 0x01);
11        delay = 0;
12        while (delay < 2000000) {
13            delay++;
14        }
15        count++;
16    }
17    return 0;
18 }
```

Listing 1: Example implementation of main function

Manual Creation

In the case that there is existing source code, one convenient way is to manually import the source files into the project. Basically, one can just copy the existing source files directly to the directory where the generated project is located. Then use the reflash key to generate the corresponding Makefile, as shown in Fig. 12.

A.2.5. Executing NiosII projects on the target hardware

You can execute your NiosII project from the Nios2SBT. To execute the application, right-click on the application project in the *Project Explorer* and choose “Run As/Nios II Hardware”. This will compile your application, create a downloadable image, download the software image and execute it on the target hardware. Before executing, please make sure that you programmed the target hardware with the correct hardware design (see section ??).

Another option is to debug your application. To start debugging, right-click the project and select “Debug As/Nios II Hardware”. This will execute the same steps as running the software and additionally start Nios2SBT’s debugger.

If a window similar to figure 17 appears, your Target Connection setup may be incorrect. To setup the target connection, open the *Target Connection* tab and click the *Refresh Connections* button. Select a *Processor* to execute your target on and a *Byte Stream Device*, through which

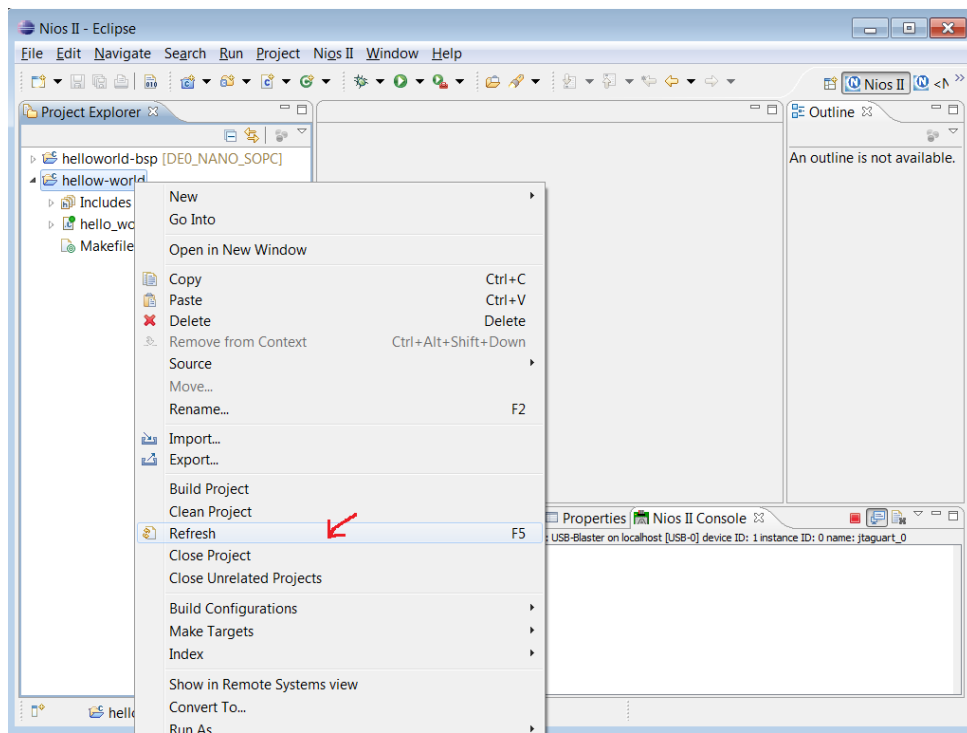


Figure 12: Refresh the application project to import source code

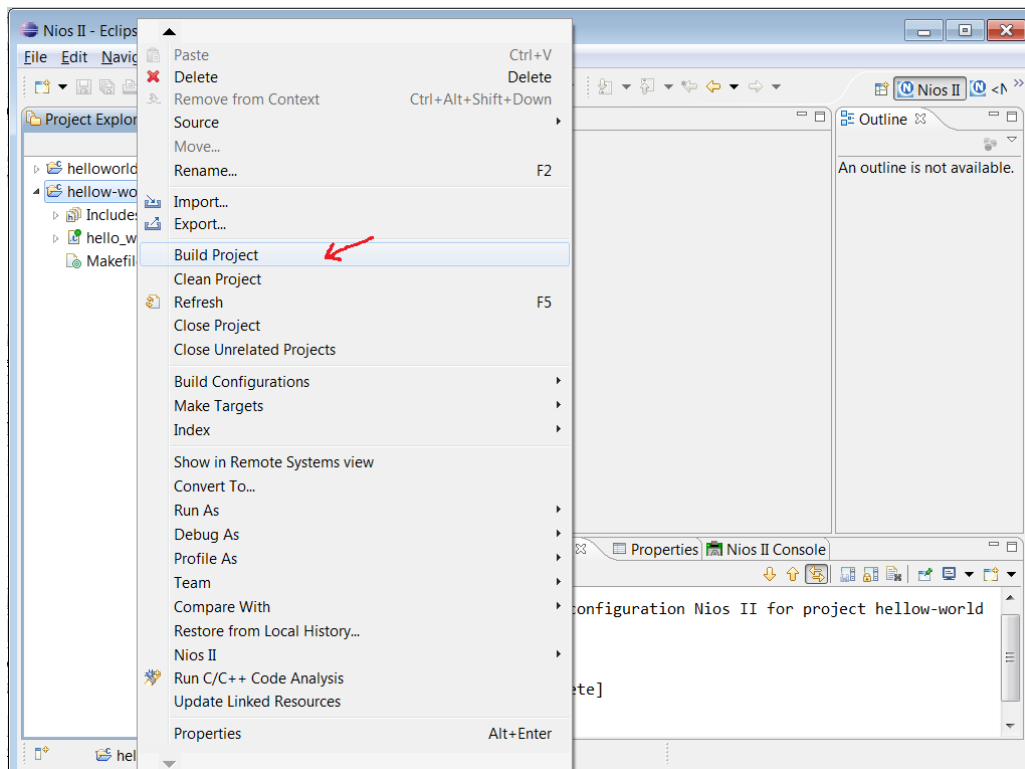


Figure 13: Compile the application

text output will be transferred (see 18). Confirm your selection with *Apply* and start debugging the software with *Debug*.

This finishes the tutorial on how to run your first NiosII Application.

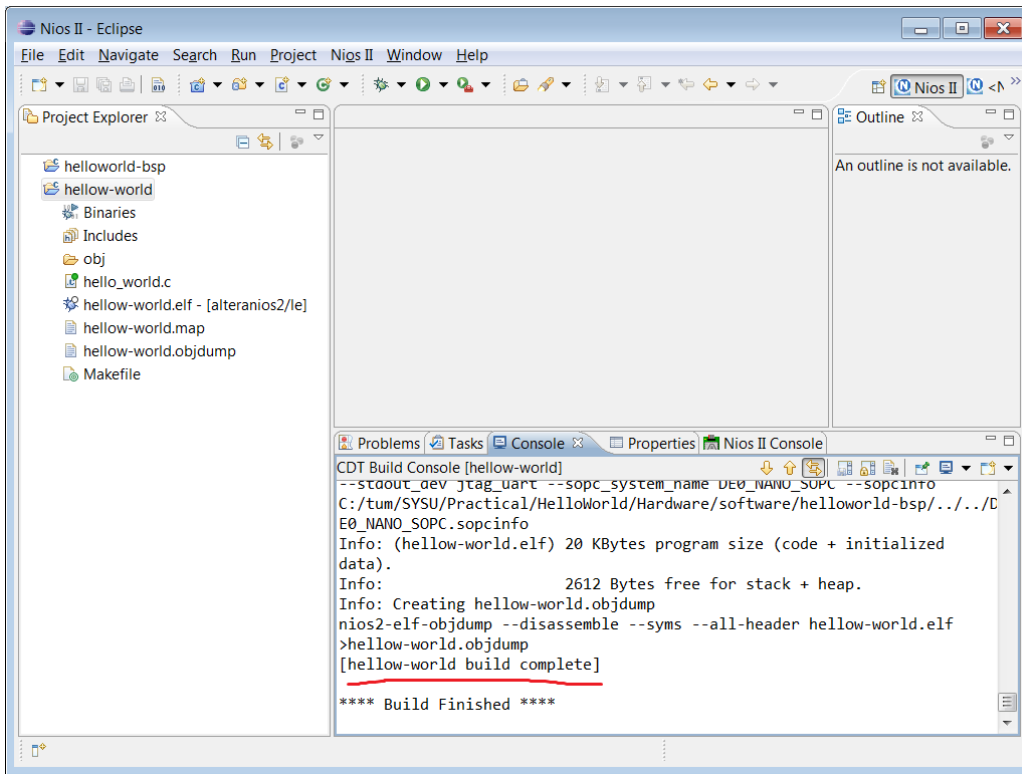


Figure 14: The result of the application compilation

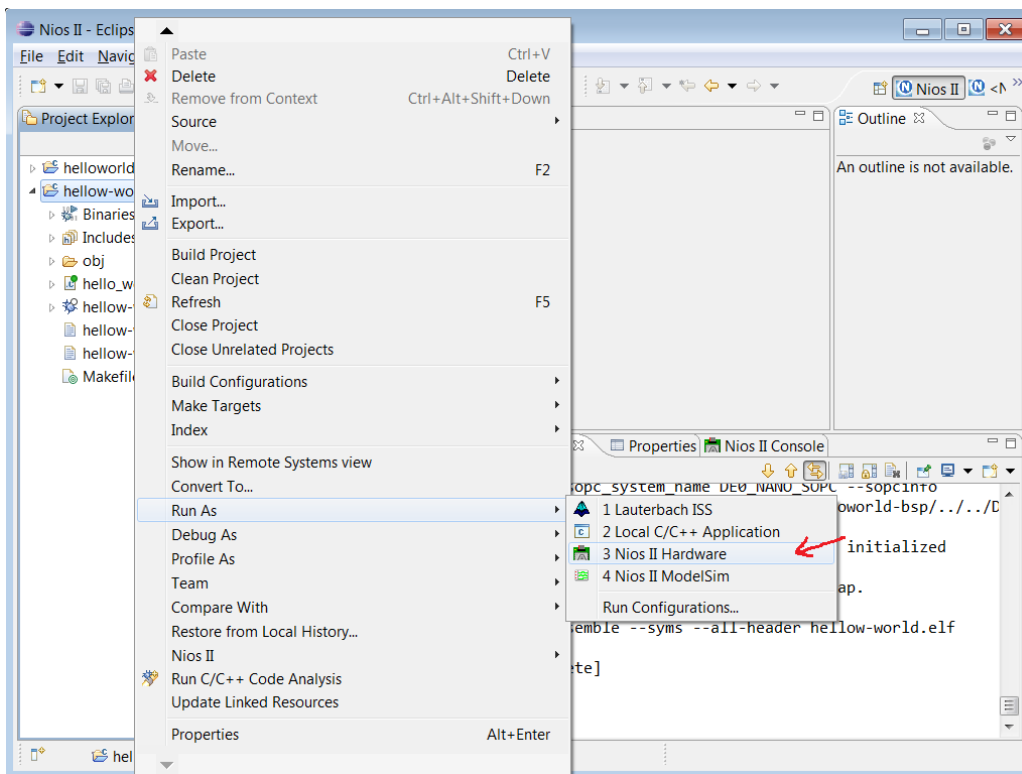


Figure 15: Run the application on the FPGA

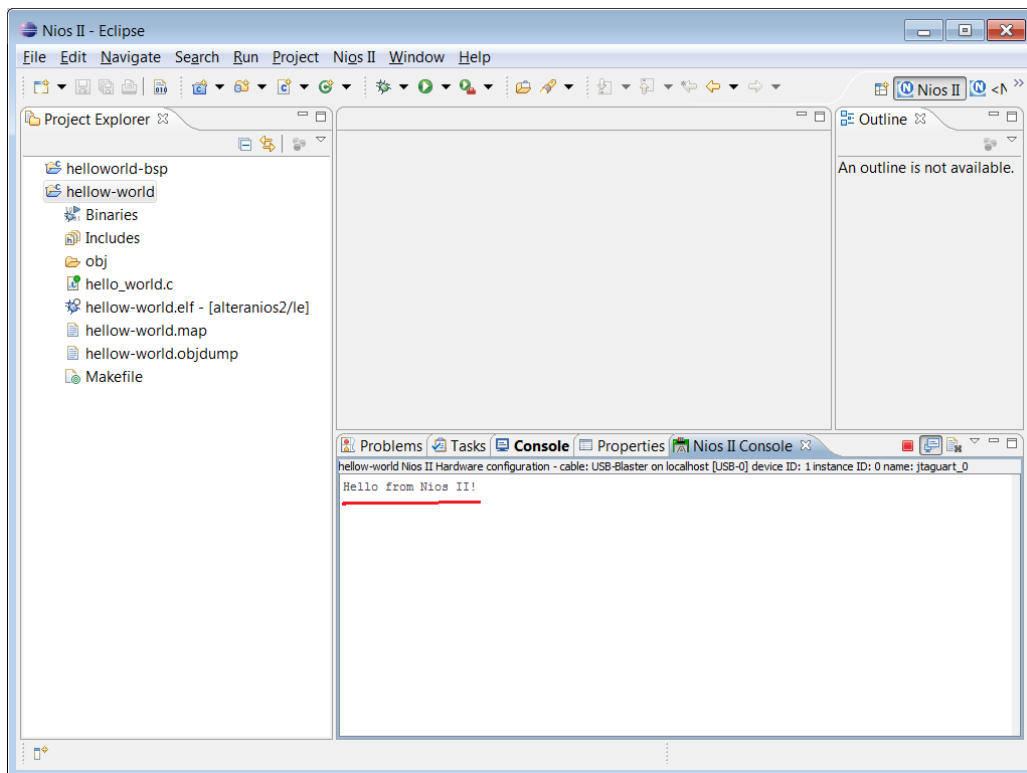


Figure 16: The result of the application execution

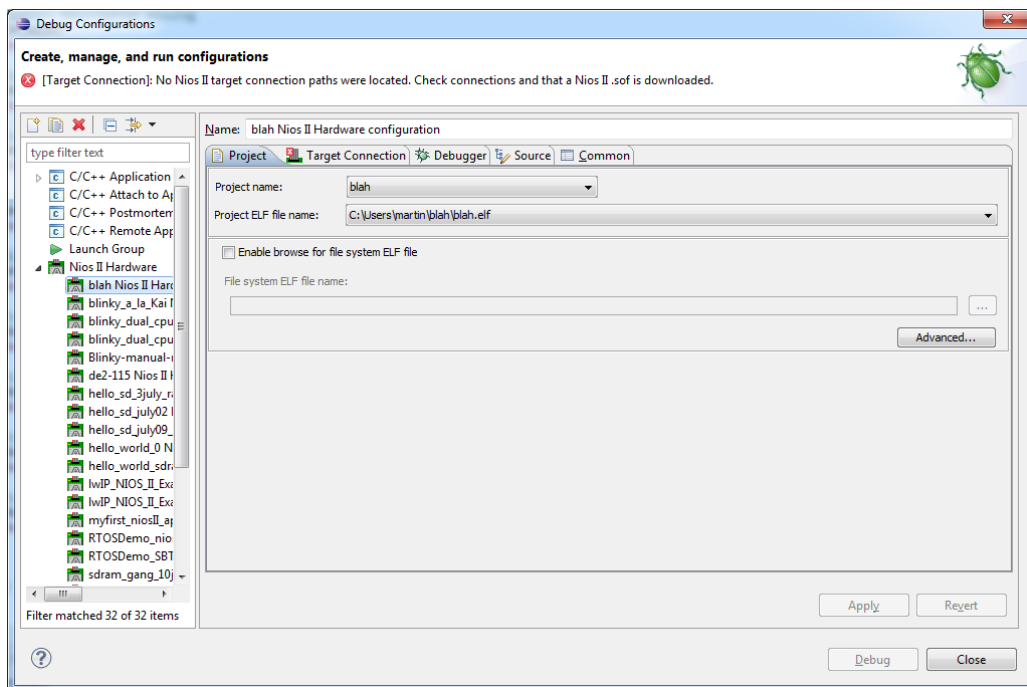


Figure 17: Error indicating wrong target connection path

A.2.6. Tips

- Enable the *enable_small_driver* option, click the *Generate* button, and then the *Exit* button.
- No white space is allowed for all the names of the files and projects.