

Guidelines for the Implementation of The International Team Project

InternACTional 2020

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INTRODUCTION

These guidelines are a comprehensive description of the International Team Project through the European Strategic Partnership project called InternACTional. These will be used to answer the main questions that may arise before starting the project and while implementing it.

These guidelines cover the following aspects:

- Student team's formation principles
- Selection of topics for the teams to work on
- Working methods employed by student teams and their use in different study programs
- Ways to ensure the sustainability of the results developed by the teams

This project has been originally piloted from 2019 to 2021 by the three following universities: Vilnius University (Lithuania), University Jean Moulin Lyon 3 (France) and the University of Bergen (Norway) with the coordination of the non-profit organization Knowledge Economy Forum (KEF) based in Vilnius, Lithuania. Detailed contacts can be found at the end of this document.

1. DEFINITIONS

1.1 Project terminology

International Team Project

A practice-oriented course or project where students from different universities work in teams in order to provide a possible solution to case problems provided by organizations or businesses (hereafter addressed as case partners) connected to social and/or environmental challenges.



Business Case

A real-life problem that a Case Partner faces and wants external help in finding the best solution to.



1.2 The different roles & responsibilities in the project

The international team project's different roles are:

- The Academic Committee
- The Student Coordinators
- The Case Partners
- The Mentors
- The International Student Teams

Academic committee

The academic committee is responsible for the academic development of the InternACTional project. This includes tasks like establishing cooperation between universities and with potential international case partners, creating joint activities and content for shared modules, and updating the guidelines when necessary. The academic committee consists of academic and administrative staff from every participating institution. There is also at least one student coordinator from every participating institution in the academic committee.

Student coordinators

The student coordinators are students from each participating institution that are involved in the planning, coordination and implementation of the project. Their main role is to assist where it is needed in the InternACTional project and the local project, therefore the tasks the student coordinator has may vary between universities. However, there are some tasks that are similar across borders:

The student coordinators:

- Have at least one student coordinator from each institution as a part of the academic committee
- Participate in meetings:
 - Local institution meetings



- Student coordinator meetings, locally and across institutions (these are the student coordinators' responsibility to plan and hold)
- Academic Committee meetings
- Mediate between the academic committee, student coordinators (and, at some universities, the students participating in the programme)
- Share ideas and make drafts for further development of the project (especially where they have insights from the students' point of view)
- Assist in relevant assignments for the project's development (e.g. share ideas for and be a part of module videos, make drafts for activities etc.)
- Are responsible to update the student coordinator guidelines when needed
- Organize the student feedback sessions between universities (see Feedback Sessions under 4.1 Joint activities)
- Present the InternACTional project at the beginning of the project/semester and be the students' contact person regarding the InternACTional project

Case partners

Any type of organization (private or public, governmental/ non-governmental/ business, etc.) that provides a concrete case to the team of students to explore and propose an innovation (service, product, process, event etc.) for; answering the issues of the case, and that could be adapted to the context of the case. Ideally, this innovation could be implemented. Provide a solution.

The case provided has to:

- Be important for the organisation (only then they will devote the time and efforts to solve it with the team)
- Have no best solution so far (as we want the students to have total freedom to develop any solution, not to become only implementors of someone else's idea)
- Be manageable to be solved by a team of students in a set period of time (if the initial case is very broad and seems to be impossible to solve, we advise the organisation to split it into steps and students can solve parts of the problem)

The case partners are expected to appoint a representative (a mentor), whom the students can contact to lead, support and guide the teams of students throughout the process.



Partnership with case partners

Main guidelines:

1. Every institution is responsible for recruiting local partners – case partners.
2. Institutional cases (local cases at one institution that are only a part of the local, and not the InternACTional project) are decided by the institution in question.
3. For cross-institutional cases, “worthy” cases are submitted to Academic Committee for review and acceptance.
4. All cases are grouped into i) quick wins and ii) complex problems. Quick wins are presented to teams in European Innovation Race and Complex problems to course teachers as a basis for longer innovation projects.
5. When partners for cross-institutional cases are recruited, emphasis should be placed on the international dimension, the sustainability dimension and that the case is complex enough to generate innovative solutions.
6. The communication with the Case Partner is held by a responsible person from each institution. This person could be a teacher, administration staff, or student and it is up to each institution to decide and appoint the responsible person.
7. A trilateral agreement should be signed between the student team’s institution(s), case partner and each student in a team that clarifies issues and expectations connected to confidentiality and intellectual property.

Mentors

A representative appointed by the Case Partner (its employee/ volunteer/ other representative) whose main task is to support the team of students: explain in detail the business case, answer students’ questions, when needed provide the student with access to the organization’s resources, staff, etc.

International student teams

The international student teams are teams with members from all or several of the participating universities. Every institution has local student teams that work with a given case, but there are also opportunities to have international student teams, either for a short period of time (European Innovation Race) or for the whole student team project depending on the level of collaboration.

Forming international student teams

During the course, two separate types of teams can be formed:

- For the European Innovation Race, inter-institutional teams (~2 students from each institution) will be formed. These teams will work intensively together through digital collaboration tools throughout the innovation race.
- Right after the innovation race, students will be invited to participate in international teams for the larger innovation projects throughout the semester. These international teams will be formed based on student interests. We expect to have a few cross-institutional teams, however, the majority will be local student teams.

M1 Introduction (see 4.1 Modules) will cover full involvement opportunities for students.

2. CONCEPT OF INTERNATIONAL TEAM PROJECT

2.1 The goal of the International Team Project

The end goal of the project is to create a cross-institutional, international, practice-based, interdisciplinary and student-centred interactive learning course, that provides students with a chance to create and implement social and sustainable innovations as possible solutions for different real-world sustainability challenges – and empowers them to do so.



The International Team Project:

- Takes students through course modules, providing an essential theory for efficient teamwork and communication, sustainability, innovation and design thinking skills
- Provides an opportunity to work on real-world problems
- Gives hands-on sessions with societal stakeholders (case partners)

In order to be as adaptable as possible, the International Team Project has a flexible structure, which can be adapted according to the institutions' needs. Different levels of collaboration can be found in section 5.

2.2 International Team Project's value proposition for students

The benefits and value for the students involved in the InternACTional-project is multiple:

- It provides international and practical experience:
 - Synchronous activities provide an opportunity to experience international collaboration. It is practice-oriented learning – it goes past the standard theoretical approach by solving business cases and real-life problems
- Development of soft skills: entrepreneurship, intercultural communication, collaboration, complex problem solving
- Innovative: sustainable and social innovation
- Stimulating: it is interdisciplinary, challenging, collective, creative, practical and strategic for a professional insertion
- It is easy: students get enough theory before jumping to practical problems and creating solutions and are provided with a number of support instruments – i.e. mentors, student-coordinators, and common sessions.

2.3 The International Team Project's value proposition for the institutions

- Flexibility and compliancy – it can be integrated into an existing course, enriching it with international and practical experience
- It gives additional value to students
- Collaboration with organizations and institutions
- Internationalisation - an accessible way to add an international dimension to a course and build partnerships between institutions

2.4 The International Team Project's value proposition for the organizations (Case Partners)

- Problem-solving: Get an opportunity to get a possible solution to their challenges from the students' innovations
- Marketing: more visible and known by students and possible to recruit future users/customers etc.
- Internships/future employees: get a chance to get to know students and possibly recruit potential candidates for internships or future employees

2.5 Challenges of International Team Project

Coordination

Challenge:

Different schedules across institutions: prolonged international teams working together for 10 weeks need a lot of coordination in synchronous sessions

Recommendation:

- Build a solid project team with teachers and administrative people
- Have the recommendations originally placed in the introduction about the group forming/course to adapt etc.

Communication

Challenge:

Digital contact can involve digital issues (zoom etc.)



Recommendation:

- Define adequate tools for collaborative work of the project team - distance learning - videoconference etc. which are safe and suitable for external communication and cooperation
- Bring IT and digital support teams of your institution on board
- Also ask the students about the tools they use

Cultural differences

Challenge:

Terminology, international mindset, interdisciplinary approaches, cultural differences, institutional and company relations, business sectors etc. are not the same in every country

Recommendations:

- Clarify terminology, mindset, approaches, cultural differences, relations etc. with your project partners
- Be sure you understand each other beyond these differences before going in the wrong direction
- Be open and non-judgemental about other ways of communicating and preferences of work practices



3. SKILLS TRAINED

Note that the skills trained may vary between the participating institutions, since some of the modules can be labelled voluntary and some mandatory by the student's institution, which is not necessarily the same for all the participating institutions.

Learning goals of International Team Project:

Learn to tackle complex real-life problems and develop coherent solutions.

Efficient work in teams:

- Collaborative skills by working in teams with institutions, case partners etc.
- Learn how to give and receive constructive feedback through feedback training and feedback sessions
- Initiative and self-confidence through project work with real-life cases and pitching skills through presenting innovations
- Interdisciplinarity by working in teams with students from other disciplines and with external organisations
- Conflict resolution, learning from another perspective, debating, listening skills from project work and teamwork
- Facilitation, and leadership skills by organizing roles and tasks in student teams (choose a leader to represent the group and facilitate meetings etc.)

Complex problem solving:

- Diverse problem solving by working on a possible solution for an organisation's case challenge
- Decision-making throughout the project process
- Creativity and innovation skills by learning innovation methods such as design thinking and using those skills in the project development
- Decision making based on knowledge about sustainability and integrating this into the innovations
- Climate change knowledge by learning about climate change and the challenges we are facing related to it



Intercultural communication:

- The understanding of cultural differences and expanding the toolbox for handling cultural differences based on experiences from working in international teams
- Insights and know-how about business culture in other countries by joining and interacting in the International Team Project
- Emotional intelligence by working with different people from different cultures, disciplines etc.

Modern innovation:

- Entrepreneurial mindset, and learning from failing, testing and experimenting
- Innovation methods
- Sustainable innovation and sustainability
- Social innovation and social responsibility

Self-awareness and situation evaluation:

- Overcoming failures from project work over time
- Adaptation to situations through theoretical and practical viewpoints
- Build confidence in presenting ideas in an international context
- Pitch training

4. STRUCTURE

4.1 Joint activities

The InternACTional Team Project program consists of several joint activities between the participating institutions. These activities are:

- Ice-breaker exercises for online sessions
- Team project management for concrete case solving
- Online learning modules
- European innovation race
- Feedback sessions
- Final pitch



Ice-breaker activities

When collaborating online for the first time students can be hesitant. This can be addressed by doing an ice-breaker activity before working on an actual project. Examples of these activities can be found in the annex.



Online learning modules

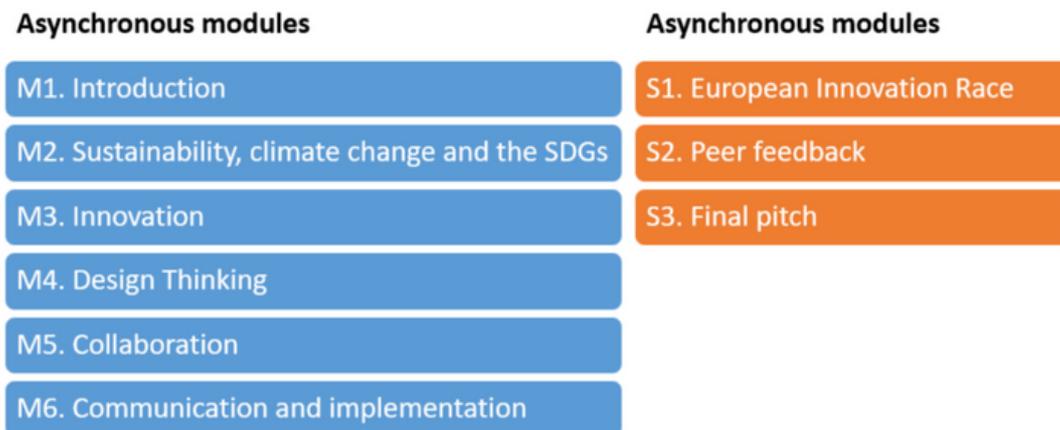
Some of the participating institutions are responsible for individual modules as a part of an international learning platform for the participating institutions of the InternACTional partnership to use. The modules are designed as independent modules in the course, teaching particular skill(s) or subjects. The modules consist of 5-7 minutes videos, essential readings, exercises and support material. Hence the assigned institution is responsible to deliver that content to their allocated module and keep it updated (e.g. the University of Bergen is responsible for the module “Sustainability, climate change and the SDGs”)

In order to fulfil International Team Project flexibility, there are two types of modules:

- **Synchronous** modules, which have to be synchronized between participating institutions, in order to achieve maximum International Team Project performance
- **Asynchronous** modules, which can be carried out “offline” locally in each institution, and are non-mandatory

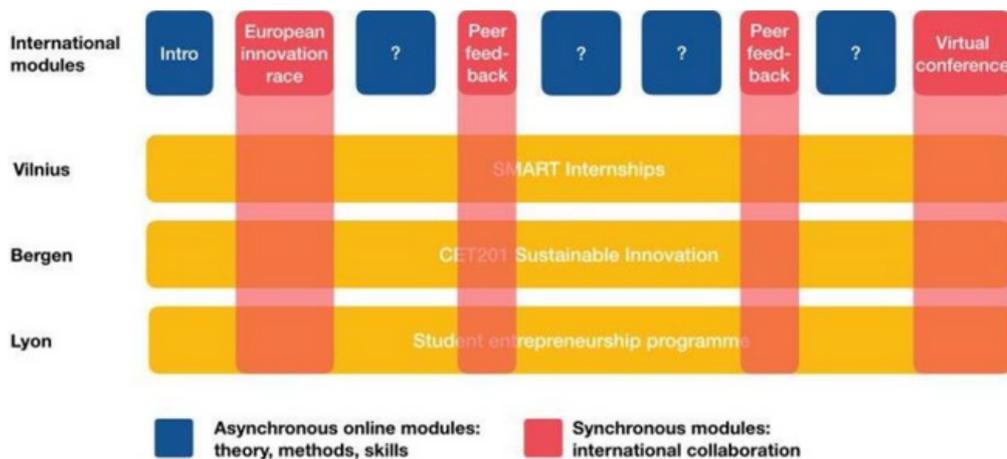
At each local institution, the online learning modules may be integrated into or supplemented with different classroom or online activities such as workshops and additional lectures.

Figure 1: Topics of the modules according to the micromodule structure:



As presented in the picture above, nine modules are proposed. Detailed module descriptions are available in the Annex.

Figure 2: Principles of flexible modules approach:



1. Synchronous modules must be executed simultaneously (at least in 2 institutions at the same time).
2. Asynchronous modules should be pre-selected as either mandatory or optional by each institution according to its needs.
3. Optional modules are available for students at any time during the course.

The flexible structure can be applied in different ways: i.e. when aligning different timelines or institutional involvement in a course (see example in section 5.2 Timeline)

European Innovation Race

The European Innovation Race is a kick-off event for some of the students participating in the international team project. They form international inter-institutional teams (e.g. two from each institution) in charge of providing an innovative solution to a small case over a short period of time (a couple of days). It can be compared to hackathons, start-up challenges, innovation bootcamps or similar innovation events. It can be led/conducted online.

The European Innovation Race should be arranged when the students already have a basic understanding of the Design Thinking (or chosen) methodology and its principles (e.g. after they have gone through the Design Thinking module's first part - the Introduction to Design Thinking).

Feedback Sessions

The feedback sessions are an opportunity for the students to share and present their innovations in their current form across borders with other students in the international team projects where they give and receive feedback on each other's innovations in turn. The feedback sessions should be arranged after the student in the international team projects have an idea for their innovation before the final pitch so that there is time to do adjustments to the innovation after the received feedback.

The student coordinators are responsible for coordinating and arranging the feedback sessions. The students should receive a guide on how to give and receive constructive feedback. These files can be found in the annexe. There is to be set a period of time that the feedback sessions should happen (e.g. 1-2 weeks), but the student themselves should plan when the session is to be arranged in the established timeframe. Because of different time schedules between the institutions, it is recommended that a feedback session consists of one of the teams presenting and the other giving feedback in one session and that there should be held two feedback sessions so that both teams can present and give feedback (e.g. feedback session 1: team A present and team B gives feedback, and feedback session 2: team B presents and team A gives feedback). If possible, the student teams can choose to present and give feedback both ways in one feedback session instead of two. The feedback session itself should last no longer than 1 hour unless the students want to prolong it.

Final Pitch

The final pitch is the final event of the international team projects where the students present their final innovation/solution for their given case. This pitch is generally organised locally. If possible, the final pitch should be available for other participating universities and case partners either as a recording or through live participation. Students receive pitch training beforehand.

5. IMPLEMENTATION

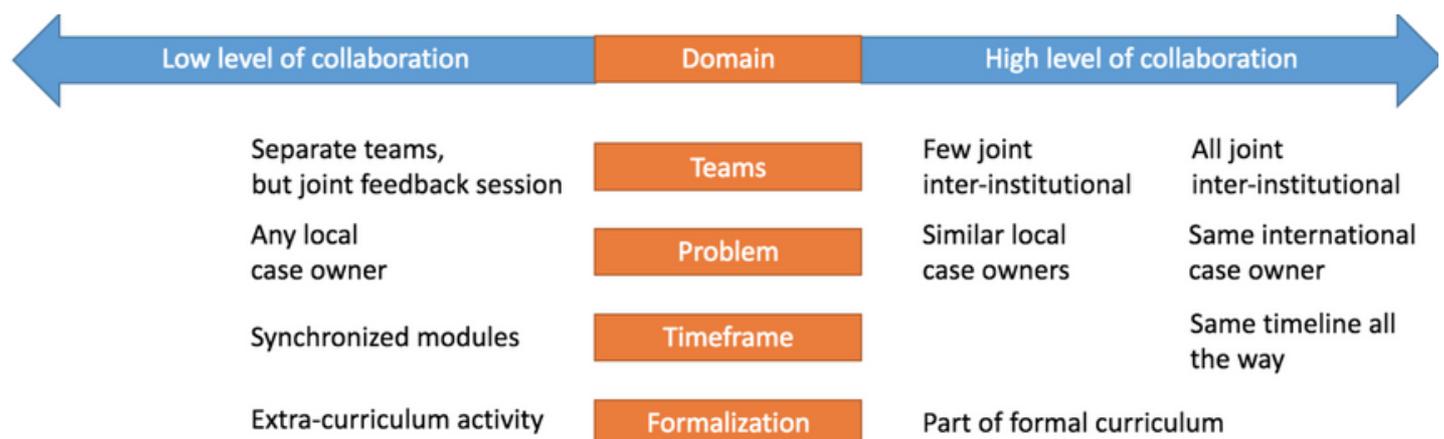
5.1 Level of implementation

Institutions

The flexible structure of the project can be adapted according to the institutions' needs. The minimum requirement of project activities for the participating universities to take part in is:

- Have one or several representatives for the academic committee
- Have one or several student coordinators in the academic committee
- Have a case partner (local or international)
- Take part in the European Innovation Race
- Take part in the international feedback session (minimum 1)
- Take part in the final pitch

Figure 3: Level of collaboration:



5.2 Timeline

Here we present an outline for the timeline of the project for different scenarios. The institutions might enrol on the joint course either once during the academic year (in the spring or autumn semester) or join the course in both semesters.

Figure 4: Example of different scenarios for the implementation of the joint course:



6. FORMS OF ASSESSMENT

Each institution decides on the forms of assessment use, but participating institutions are encouraged to share ideas, assignments, tests, etc. It is recommended that joint (international) activities are emphasised by all partner institutions, so the motivation for participants is the same.

7. TOOLS FOR VIRTUAL COOPERATION

There are a lot of different virtual tools which you can choose from, but sometimes less is more. Thus, we are suggesting a few tools according to the purpose they could serve during different international team project stages.

Recommended tools for:

- **Video conferencing** (during innovation race, synchronous sessions, feedback sessions, ice-breaker sessions): Zoom, Teams or similar platforms
- **Sharing learning activities and material** (common learning management system): Moodle
- **Team collaboration** (innovation race, feedback sessions or just working in teams during the semester): Microsoft Teams, Zoom or a similar platform.
- **Innovation process tools** (presenting ideas, brainstorming): Padlet, Stormboard, Miro

8. IDENTITY; VISUAL GUIDE

Attached is the identity of the project – the visual guide. This is the logo, colours and font to use for public material produced for the project. You can find the logo and download the font from the InternACTional annexe. There you can also find the visual guide for the video modules.



ANNEXES 1-2

ANNEX NR.1

InternACTional visual guide

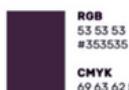
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ANNEX NR.2

EXAMPLES FOR ICE-BREAKERS

ALTERNATIVE I

All students are separated into groups of 4-8 people (these groups are international cross-institutional student teams which will work on a selected topic. Thus it is more important that they familiarise themselves with each other rather than with the whole group). They write two truths and a lie about themselves. Then everyone votes for each person's "lie" and afterwards each person tells the answers.

ALTERNATIVE II

In smaller groups, in pairs, students have 1 minute to draw a portrait of the other (so they need to have a piece of paper and a pencil/sharper at hand). Then they have 1 minute each to interview the other, they can ask about anything they want, also fun facts and silly things, and they need to take notes. After these 3 minutes in total (it is on purpose that they have very limited time), students present the other to the rest of the group by showing the portrait and telling the others about the info they were able to gather during the 1 minute-long interview. The purpose of this ice breaker is to take down the barriers by letting another student present you, and by this avoid shyness. It is sometimes easier to talk about others rather than yourself, and you need to pay attention to what the other is telling you. The function of the portrait is to challenge our urge to make things perfect before we present them to others. This is important to become used to in innovation processes, as you will have to present unfinished prototypes to others/end users several times during the process.



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InternACTional 2020



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