



unicom

Come for Cookies. Stay for Community

A Toolbox for Community Building,
Facilitating Participation, and Enhancing
Belonging for Higher Education Communities

THE TOOLS – WORKSHOP SCRIPTS

“Come for Cookies. Stay for Community.”
A Toolbox for Community Building, Facilitating Participation, and Enhancing Belonging for Higher Education Communities
The Tools – workshop scripts
June 2024

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Project coordinator

University of Warsaw (Volunteer Centre of the University of Warsaw)



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Palacký University
Olomouc



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The UNICOMM Project and the idea behind the Toolbox

The idea of the University Community Active Participation (UNICOMM) Project comes from the belief that higher education institutions (HEIs) are more than academic courses and research, and that all the people who attend these institutions and work within them should be noticed and feel motivated to be engaged in the initiatives that they find important. Recent events, such as the pandemic, have highlighted the importance of relationships and being part of a group, but they also proved that rapidly changing conditions make it difficult to strengthen the bonds and enhance the sense of belonging. Thus, the main aims of the UNICOMM Project are: to identify the patterns and factors that support the incorporation of inclusive and active student participation, to enhance students' competences to allow them to fully participate in the inclusive HEI community, and to create guidelines and recommendations concerning organisational structures of European higher education institutions in the context of uncertain times and rapid changes.

Starting from November 2022, the consortium consisting of the European Students' Union (ESU), the Palacký University Olomouc (UP), the University of Applied Sciences Upper Austria (FH OÖ) and the University of Warsaw (UW) as a coordinating institution has been cooperating within the UNICOMM Project focusing on the above-mentioned goals.

The first activity of the consortium, coordinated by the University of Applied Sciences Upper Austria, was a survey aiming at the analysis of the bond-building factors between students and higher education institutions, the latter understood as both institutions and communities consisting of various actors. The report entitled [*University as community: students' perceptions of participation, engagement and belonging at European higher education institutions*](#) is a summary of the survey results, and also a base for further activities within the UNICOMM Project, such as the present publication *“Come for Cookies. Stay for Community”. A Toolbox for Community Building, Facilitating Participation, and Enhancing Belonging for Higher Education Communities*.

The second stage of the project consisted in the organisation of a series of workshops for students within the consortium institutions. The experience and know-how from the workshops have been collected in this publication, with the aim to serve every higher education institution that works on the topics of community enhancement, as well as soft- and transversal skills training outside the regular curricula or within it.

The consortium's initial assumption was that the shift to online learning caused by the pandemic had reduced opportunities for social interaction and professional development, with students treating HEIs as merely educational providers. This, in consequence, had weakened the bond between students and HEIs. Therefore, the tools and solutions proposed during the UNICOMM Project workshops are flexible and adaptable to not only onsite, but also remote learning without any loss in quality.

The idea for this Toolbox and the workshop curriculum is to provide a variety of adjustable options considering diverse perspectives of:

- institutions – the proposed solutions are conceived to be adaptable to different organisational structures and modalities,
- students – the activities are designed not to put too much pressure on students or be a burden for their tight schedules, but to gradually strengthen their sense of responsibility and self-confidence in action.

One part of this Toolbox describes the background and the frame for the three main modules of the workshop design, along with the details about the workshop organisation within the consortium institutions. As the student experience and perspective are at the centre of the UNICOMM Project, in the course of the workshops, the participants were invited to present their insights in the form of written essays. Therefore, another part of the Toolbox presents the student viewpoint on the most important topics covered during the workshops. The other section of this publication is a summary of the consortium institutions' experience regarding the organisation of the workshops aimed at enhancing the students' sense of belonging and increasing their skill levels. The final part consists of scripts for workshops that can be conducted by HEIs in various forms for diverse audiences in order to enhance the community bonds, gather student opinions on shaping the institutional reality, as well as develop their sense of self-confidence in active participation.

The Toolbox is designed for diverse audiences and practical purposes. There is no specific reading order. You, as the reader, can choose the parts that are most suitable for you.

The Tools – workshop scripts



The Tools – workshop scripts

The workshops should be designed in an inclusive form. Language, types of studies, age of participants, etc. should not be the key criteria for selecting participants, because for some students, the participation itself may be a way to build their self-confidence and wellbeing. For some students, this is an opportunity to develop skills; for others – a form of “getting out of their comfort zone” and facing challenges in building resilience in their everyday academic life.

Social Module

The Social Module comprises the following activities:

- Creative Island
- Commonalities and Uniqueness
- Exploring the Sense of Belonging
- Communication: Coconutty or Peachy?
- The Alleys of Trust
- The Rules of Cooperation

Creative Island

- **Goals of the activity:** ice-breaking among participants, setting a creative and cooperative atmosphere
- **Time of the activity:** 30 minutes (*for a group of around 20 participants; with more people, the activity might require more time*)
- **Resources for the offline version:** various equipment of everyday use, toys, office supplies, tools, etc. – the more things the better
- **Resources for the online version:** an online platform with breakout rooms
- **Description:**

Before the activity starts, the facilitators should scatter all the props around the workshop room. The participants are asked to look around and pick up ONE thing that is in the *room* (*they have one minute to pick up one thing – the choice should be rather intuitive than thought-through*). Once every participant has something in hand, the facilitator divides the group randomly into teams of 3–4 people who are instructed to sit with each other. All teams are now castaways who landed on a remote island with no cell reception or internet. Their task is to discuss within their teams how the items they have will help them survive until a rescue team finds them. After around 10 minutes of discussions, the teams are to present their ideas to the whole group.

In the online version of the task: Before being divided into breakout rooms, the participants are asked to look around and take one thing from their surroundings (*the facilitator may advise them to*

look further and take something other than a pen or a cell phone, which are usually close by during the online meetings).

Commonalities and Uniqueness

- **Goal of the activity:** getting to know each other within the group
- **Time of the activity:** 35 minutes (*for a group of around 20 participants; with more people, the activity might require more time*)
- **Resources for the offline version:** flipcharts and markers
- **Resources for the online version:** an online platform with breakout rooms, shared documents/online boards to write on
- **Description:**

If the activity follows the [Creative Island](#) directly, the participants may stay in the same teams. If not, the facilitators should start by dividing the group randomly into 3–4 teams (*→ breakout rooms in the online version*). Each team receives a flipchart and markers (*in the online version: a link to a shared online document/board*). The task is to prepare a presentation of their team on the flipchart covering the following information:

- who are we? – some basic info about the participants,
- three things/features common for all the people in the team,
- one unique thing/feature for each person in the group.

After 10–15 minutes, the teams present their flipcharts to the whole group. The facilitator summarises all the common traits and unique features for the whole group.

In the online version of the task: The facilitator should prepare and send the link to a separate document/board for each group so that they could create their presentations and then summarise the effects on the board common for the whole group.

- **Additional tips and comments:** While summarising the task, when the participants are sharing their unique features, the facilitator may ask the rest of the teams if maybe some of their members also share this particular thing/trait. This helps to prove a point that we share a lot of things with many people even if the group is very diverse, and it is always good to search for commonalities, but also to know our unique features that can be an asset for the group work.

This task might also come in handy in Skills Development Module, in the context of the intercultural communication skill set. Instead of asking the participants about their individual preferences/features, the facilitators may ask them to find common and unique things for their cultures in order to develop curiosity and intercultural dialogue among participants.

This task helps to discover hobbies, common interests and preferences. In the case of the University of Warsaw, some of the participants discovered that they share a hobby of crocheting, which later led to a community event at the university, where everyone interested could come and do some crocheting together. Their works were later listed on a charity auction for a non-profit organisation that helps stray animals.



Exploring the Sense of Belonging

- **Goal of the activity:** establishing a common understanding of the term “belonging”
- **Time of the activity:** 40 minutes
- **Resources for the offline version:** flipcharts, markers
- **Resources for the online version:** an online platform with breakout rooms, online boards
- **Description:**

The facilitator divides the group randomly into teams (→ *breakout rooms in the online version*) of 3–4 people who are instructed to sit with each other around a table. Each group chooses the moderator at each table to facilitate the discussion. The facilitator presents the task to discuss and reflect together on the following question: “What does belonging at university mean to you?” and to note down these associations on a flipchart. After 10–15 minutes, the facilitator mixes the groups to form new teams who also sit together around the tables. In the new teams, the topic for discussion is: “What do you need to belong at university”, and the participants are asked again to add their associations to the flipchart (*it is the same flipchart for the whole duration of the task*). After 10–15 minutes, the group moderators (*who remained at their respective tables throughout the activity*) present the results of the two rounds. In the final round, the participants walk around all the flipcharts and assign points (*via dot stickers or drawing dots with markers*) to the answers resonating with what is the most important to them

personally. After maximally 10 minutes, the whole group discusses how we can achieve the aspects considered most important.

In the online version of the task: the participants can draw dots or other chosen shapes on the shared boards as a form of voting.

- **Additional tips and comments:** In order to facilitate the choice of priorities, the participants should be assigned a certain number of “dots” to vote in the final phase of the activity.

Communication: Coconutty or Peachy?

- **Goals of the activity:** establishing a space for different communication preferences and reflecting on different styles of relationship building
- **Time of the activity:** 30–40 minutes
- **Resources for the offline version:** picture of a coconut, picture of a peach, flipchart
- **Resources for the online version:** an online platform with breakout rooms, a board with the pictures of a coconut and a peach
- **Description:**

[The task is based on the classical metaphor from the intercultural communication field derived from K. Lewin's theory, developed further by Fons Trompenaars¹]

First, the facilitator asks the whole group to describe the features of a coconut and a peach, and writes down the answers on the

¹ Trompenaars, F., & Hampden-Turner, C. (1997). *Riding the waves of culture: Understanding diversity in global business*. McGraw-Hill.

flipchart (→ *online version: a digital board, for example Padlet, Zoom whiteboard*). Then, the participants are asked to imagine what character traits would be typical for the peach and the coconut if they were people, and these responses are also written down on the flipchart. Next, based on the characteristics described, the participants try to determine whether they are more “peachy” or more “coconut” in their communication preferences and relationship building. The group is divided into two teams of “coconuts” and “peaches”, which are asked to discuss what coconuts can do better to make working with peaches easier, and vice versa. Finally, the results of the teamwork are discussed in the whole group in order to establish common rules of effective communication within a diverse group.

In the online version of the task: The participants may add their answers to the shared board, and the facilitator summarises the results. If the group is big, it might be efficient to divide the participants into several smaller discussion teams instead of two bigger groups.

- **Additional tips and comments:** This metaphor might also come in handy in Skills Development Module in the context of the intercultural communication skills set, while discussing different cultural preferences towards relationship building.²

² For the theoretical base see: Meyer, E. (2015). *The culture map: Breaking through the invisible boundaries of global business*. PublicAffairs.

The Alleys of Trust

- **Goals of the activity:** individual preferences in trust-building, building mutual trust within the group, fostering respect and empathy within the group
- **Time of the activity:** 60–90 minutes
- **Resources for the offline version:** a presentation on trust-building styles, a gym room or a large classroom with an obstacle course (*it can be also arranged in the open air*)
- **Resources for the online version:** an online meeting platform, a presentation on trust-building styles, a picture of a map with a pre-assigned route, blank online boards
- **Description:**

Part 1 in the classroom: Following the previous task (*or as a separate activity*), the participants are asked to think about whom they trust in different areas of their life and then indicate on what basis they trust these people (*without the necessity to specify whom they trust, as it might be personal*) – in other words, what “makes them” trust someone? [*Guiding questions for the facilitator if the question appears difficult for the participants: Why do you trust your parents/siblings/family? Why do you trust your best friend? Why do you trust your thesis supervisor? Is it because this person is an expert, or because it’s a genuine good person? etc.*] The facilitator explains different trust-building preferences among people. The proposed theoretical frame: trust from the head and trust from the heart³, open trust and validation trust.

³ For the theoretical base see: Meyer, E. (2015). *The culture map: Breaking through the invisible boundaries of global business*. PublicAffairs.

Part 2 in the gym room/larger classroom/outside: The facilitator divides the group into pairs. One person in each pair is blindfolded, while the other guides them. Initially, the pairs walk together through simple terrain without obstacles, then through more challenging routes. Eventually, they must overcome the obstacle course together. The group summarises the activity with the discussion of their sentiments throughout the task – both the blindfolded and the guides should share their feelings and challenges and reflect on how we can relate them to trust-building in daily cooperation.

In the online version of the task: The second part of this activity might be done in an asynchronous mode. The group is divided in pairs. One person receives a map with a complicated route, and the task is to explain it via email to the other person without using any names of countries. The other person cannot see the map and needs to re-create the map and the route on the assigned board, but can ask only one question per email. After the designated time (*for instance one week*) has passed, the task is discussed in the whole group, with the focus on how the pairs had built communication and trust through succeeding in the task, as well as how we can build trust in online cooperation, without seeing each other.

- **Additional tips and comments:** Part 1 might also come in handy in Skills Development Module in the context of the intercultural communication skills set, while discussing trust-building and cooperation in diverse teams. (*For the theoretical frame, see reference 2*)

Within these activities based on trust-building and communication training, the roles for individual participants within the group begin to be gradually defined. At the Palacký University Olomouc, these activities made it possible to break through the uncertain and nervous atmosphere that initially prevailed among the group of participants who did not know each other. At the same time, it is important to create a more serious atmosphere so that participants take the whole program seriously and focus on achieving the goal.

The Rules of Cooperation

- **Goals of the activity:** establishing common rules for cooperation, fostering respect and empathy within the group
- **Time of the activity:** 30 minutes
- **Resources for the offline version:** flipcharts and markers
- **Resources for the online version:** an online platform with breakout rooms
- **Description:**

The facilitator divides the participants randomly into teams of 4–5 people (→ *breakout rooms in the online version*). The teams are asked to create their "set of golden rules" for communication, based on their experience and findings from the previous activities, and write it down on flipcharts. After around 15 minutes, in the activity summary, the facilitator asks the teams to reconvene as one large group and compare their flipcharts. On the common flipchart (→ *shared document in the online version*), the whole group creates a common set of rules on effective communication and cooperation.

- **Additional tips and comments:** Instead of imposing the rules of cooperation from the very beginning by the facilitator, the set of “golden rules” helps the participants to feel that they co-create and co-own the workshop course. If the Social Module activities are meant to be followed by further cooperation, such an approach is especially important for developing the sense of agency among the participants.

Upon completing this module, the student:

- Knows different methods of relationship building within the group.
- Is able to work and communicate within the group.
- Is able to coordinate the work of a group or team, interact with other people as part of a team, make decisions.
- Recognises and understands the need of trust-building within the group.
- Is ready to actively cooperate and work in a group, as well as build social relations.



UNICOMM Masterclass Workshops participants during the meeting with engaged UW students

Exploratory Module

The Exploratory Module comprises the following activities:

- University as a Supportive Institution
- Meeting with Experienced Engaged Students
- Creating the Persona of an Engaged Student
- Creative Challenge: "How do you imagine a safe space for participation?"
- Photographic Visualisation of Ideas
- Active Students For (More) Community In Universities
- Department Design Task

University as a Supportive Institution

- **Goals of the activity:** presenting units that support students in the institution and familiarising the participants with where and how students can get support in various areas of their life
- **Time of the activity:** 90 minutes

- **Resources for the offline version:** sheets with the description of different stories (*relatable to different problems that can occur in student life*), a presentation on institutional units
- **Resources for the online version:** an online platform with breakout rooms, slides with the description of different stories, a presentation on institutional units
- **Description:**

The facilitator divides the group into teams (→ *breakout rooms in the online version*) of 4–5 participants. Each group receives a description of a specific problem of a certain person that can occur in a student's life. The task is to discuss what the described person should do, where they can seek help at the university, etc. Next, the teams are asked to present the results of their discussion on the forum of the whole group, and other participants can add their insights and ideas. As the final part of the activity, the facilitator presents a list of university units along with the examples of problems/issues that they can address. The provided information is related to the stories presented in the first part of the activity.

- **Additional tips and comments:** This activity can be especially useful for beginner students, but it is also useful for older students, as they are often not well familiarised with the division of tasks between various offices within the institution.

Examples of situations discussed during the workshops at the University of Warsaw

You have a friend from abroad who came to Warsaw for her master degree studies, so she will spend at least two years here. She was very excited to start this new phase of her life in Poland, as she really likes Polish culture. She came to Warsaw in September, and soon after, she was accommodated in one of the University's student dorms. That is where the problems occur. She is having a hard time getting used to living in this student dorm. The localisation is far from her faculty, so she needs to spend a lot of time commuting. She also does not get along with her roommate, since they come from very distant cultures and often argue about various things. This results in a mood decrease. She is worried that it will be extremely difficult to go through the whole year, and you are worried about her wellbeing and mental state.

This year's classes appear to be quite intense, as there are many obligatory difficult subjects to pass. Your faculty did not make things easier and presented a very tight schedule for these classes. You are managing to arrange your life at the university well, so despite the intense schedule, you are doing quite well. You have a good friend who studies with you, and, unfortunately, he is in the opposite situation. He struggles to keep up with the timetable. He is often late and mixes up the dates of certain subjects, which results in him being unprepared for classes. The professors are starting to notice this, and instead of being supportive, some of them are making comments about him not passing the semester if the situation does not improve. Your friend is worried that it will be extremely difficult to go through the whole semester, and you are worried about his wellbeing and mental state.

Your friend who is studying with you has always wanted to go for an Erasmus+ student exchange to Spain. It finally happened, and he left for Madrid in September. You stay in touch with him, and at the beginning, everything seemed to go great. He was very happy with his new dorm, new friends and interaction with Spanish culture. Unfortunately, you have noticed that his mood has changed over the last two weeks. Every time you talk or text, he says that he struggles with the university classes, as the language barrier appears to be a big obstacle. He also highlights more often how he misses home, his Polish friends and even Polish cuisine. He is worried that it will be extremely difficult to go through the whole semester, and you are worried about his wellbeing and mental state.

Questions for the discussion in teams attached to each story:

- What would you do in such a situation?
- What would you advise your friend to do, where to seek help, etc.?
- Do you know any ways in which the University could help here?

Meeting with Experienced Engaged Students

- **Goals of the activity:** mutual inspiration and motivation between more and less experienced students, exchanging individual perspectives on why and how participation outside the classroom is important and beneficial, how to find work-study-engagement-life balance and space for self-development in extracurricular activities within the university
- **Time of the activity:** 60–90 minutes
- **Resources for the offline version:** a group of 3–4 student-experts invited to share their experience in various areas of student participation
- **Resources for the online version:** an online platform with breakout rooms, a group of 3–4 student-experts invited to share their experience in various areas of student participation
- **Description:**

Pre Assignment: Before this part, the participants should think through what information they need in order to create a model of "an engaged student". As a form of a target group research, they create a list of questions that they would like to ask the experienced and engaged students. (→ *It can be done online in an asynchronous mode or during the meeting in a workshop room.*)

The task is based on the World Café setting, but instead of a certain issue being discussed at each table, there is one experienced and engaged student who tells their story to the participants and answers their previously prepared questions.

The facilitator divides the group into 3–4 teams (*depending on the number of invited student-experts*). Each group has 15 minutes to talk to the student-expert about their experience, as well as ask the

previously prepared questions. Once the designated time is up, the student-experts change tables. (→ *In the online meeting, the teams are assigned to breakout rooms with one student-expert. After 15 minutes, the student-experts leave the breakout room and are assigned to another one. There are 3–4 rounds, depending on the number of student-experts.*)

After completing the interviews with student-experts, the teams should be assigned some time to summarise their knowledge and information gathered during the activity, as it will be useful in the next task.

- **Additional tips and comments:** Inviting students with a wide history of participation in the university life is beneficial for everyone, as this is another form of recognition for these engaged students. Also, the advice from more experienced students might be useful for participants – as indicated in the UNICOMM report findings, students often seek help in solving problems among their peers.

Creating the Persona of an Engaged Student

- **Goals of the activity:** synthesis of knowledge acquired about the target group (*engaged students*), helping to understand their needs, behaviours, experiences and goals by collecting and organising information
- **Time of the activity:** 60 minutes (*for a group of around 20; recommended maximum number of participants: 24*)
- **Resources for the offline version:** a flipchart for each team with a list of guiding questions to create the persona, markers, a laptop, a projector and a screen

- **Resources for the online version:** an online platform with breakout rooms, virtual brainstorming boards (e.g. *Padlet, Zoom whiteboard*)
- **Description:** The facilitator divides the participants into groups of 4–5 (→ *online version: breakout rooms*).

If this activity is conducted after the [Meeting with Experienced Engaged](#) Students task, the participants stay in the same groups in which they conducted the interviews.

Each group receives a flipchart with a list of guiding questions to create and visualise the “engaged student” persona (→ *online version: access to a virtual board*).

Examples of questions that can help create an “engaged student” persona:

- Name and surname, age, gender
- Where are they from?
- Do they live in a dormitory/rented flat/family house?
- What does their typical day look like?
- Engagement in university community/extracurricular activities – motivations
- Engagement in university community/extracurricular activities – challenges
- Important topics/interests/values
- Which units are the most useful in terms of support for student engagement?
- How do the personas maintain a work-study-engagement-life balance?

After creating the personas, each group presents their work. At the end of the task, the facilitator should reserve time for discussion, questions and possible supplementation of information about the persons.

In the online version of the task: All participants return from breakout rooms. Each group shares their work on the screen and talks about it. After the presentations, there is time for questions and discussion.

- **Additional tips and comments:** This task is a good link between the meetings with experienced students and more conceptual workshops focused on finding solutions. It helps, among others, to summarise and analyse the information collected during the interviews.
- Prior to the task, it is worth presenting the persona concept in the form of a short presentation: where does this method come from, in what situations it is worth using it, etc.⁴

It is important to highlight that:

- This is a very simplified form of creating a persona.
- The best way to create a persona is based on reports, surveys, insights, interviews, observations. It is particularly important to avoid stereotypes and conjectures.

An example of good practice is also the implementation of this task in two stages – during two workshops.

⁴ More information about the concept of persona can be found e.g. here: Dam, R. F. & Teo, Y. S. (2024). *Personas – A Simple Introduction*. Interaction Design

Foundation - IxDF. <https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/article/personas-why-and-how-you-should-use-them>

Developmental Workshop: University of Warsaw as a supportive institution

- ❑ How to deal with various issues and situations in academic life?
- ❑ General Units of the University of Warsaw, and how they support students.
- ❑ A mix of Storytelling and World-Cafe: Meetings with engaged students.
- ❑ A profile of an engaged student of the University of Warsaw

Katarzyna Kucharska

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Because, in my opinion, we can talk about #inclusion, #equality and #belonging as much as we want but at the end what counts is how much we've listened and what we've done with what we're more aware of.

- Dora Molodyńska-Küntzel



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FH OÖ Compass

What you will find with us



Life

As a student you need a lot of energy, perseverance, other people and of course parties. The UAS Upper Austria is the perfect place to find like-minded people and to develop yourself. On our Compass you can find support on a wide range of topics.



Study

Does the anticipation of learning outweigh the fear of failing? We've collected something for all preferences and situations on our website - take a look right now to see which topics and materials are relevant for you.



Orientation

Sometimes it's good to bring a bit of order into the chaos or just to have a look at what's on offer. From semester abroad to financial matters, from accessibility to distance learning, from equipment rental to room plans and IT systems or the library - you'll find it all here!



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During the first one, the participants prepare a persona, and during the second one, they can complete information about it. This approach gives them time to verify the information about the persona, e.g. by conducting additional interviews or checking data in reports, etc.

Creative Challenge: "How do you imagine a safe space for participation?"

- **Goals of the activity:** stimulation of creative thinking, collecting reflections and ideas from participants
- **Time of the activity:** 60 minutes (*for a group of around 20; recommended maximum number of participants: 24*)
- **Resources for the offline version:** sheets of colourful thick paper in A2 or B2 format, secondary materials such as shreds, waste paper, fabric scraps, old newspapers, unused stickers, old posters and banners, etc., glue, scotch tape, markers, scissors
- **Resources for the online version:** an online platform with breakout rooms, virtual brainstorming boards (e.g. *Padlet, Zoom whiteboard*) or online graphic applications
- **Description:**

If this task is conducted after the [Creating the Persona of an Engaged Student](#) task, the participants can stay in the same groups. If not, the facilitator should start by dividing the group randomly into 4–5 teams for a group of around 20 participants (→ *online version: breakout rooms*).

The groups receive materials, and then each of them prepares its own collage and presents its reflections on the question "How do

you imagine a safe space for participation?" (→ *online version: access to a virtual board/file in a graphical application*).

The facilitator hangs the finished collages (e.g. *on the wall, windows*), creating a kind of "exhibition". Each participant is invited to see all the works, and then a representative of each team talks about their work (*just like during an exhibition of works in an art gallery*).

At the end, the facilitator invites the participants to ask questions and discuss the presented works.

In the online version of the task: all participants return from breakout rooms. Each group shares their work on the screen and talks about it. After the presentations, there is time for questions and discussion. The example of the exercise is described in *Participants' voices – how the students themselves perceive the content and the main themes of the workshops* part of the publication in the text by Krzysztof Niemiec.

Photographic Visualisation of Ideas

- **Goals of the activity:** synthesis of knowledge, workshop or module summary
- **Time of the activity:** 50 minutes (*for a group of around 20; recommended maximum number of participants: 24*)
- **Resources for the offline version:** a flipchart with instructions, smartphones or a photo camera, props (e.g. *erasable small boards for writing slogans*), markers, flipcharts, sticky notes, etc., a laptop, a projector and a screen
- **Resources for the online version:** an online platform for meetings, a shared drive

- **Description:**

If this task is conducted after the activities [Creating the Persona of an Engaged Student](#) and/or [Creative Challenge: "How do you imagine a safe space for participation?"](#), the participants should stay in the same teams. If not, the facilitators should start by dividing the group randomly into 4–5 teams for a group of around 20 participants (→ *online version: breakout rooms*).

Summarising their ideas and knowledge from the module or the entire workshops, each team prepares a photo session (*5 photos*) to creatively present their ideas and thoughts on building an engaged university community.

How they present the topic is up to them – they can use the props we have previously proposed or materials and elements available at the workshop location. At the end of the workshop, the students' works are presented, and each team talks about their series. This is also a time for discussion and questions to the authors.

In the online version of the task: All participants can take photos on their own with a smartphone and upload them to a shared drive or a designated social media group. The effects are discussed during an online meeting.

One of the slogans created by students during this task became the title for this publication: "Come for Cookies. Stay for Community."
(The graphic was created based on a photo taken by the participants.)



Active Students For (More) Community In Universities

- **Goals of the activity:** discussing different perspectives of community in HEIs ranging from institutional approach to student approach and learning how to build community-based roadmaps for more vulnerable student groups
- **Time of the activity:** 2 sessions of 3 hours, breaks in-between, independent time in the groups
- **Resources for the offline version:** a flipchart for each team, sticky notes, markers, a blue tack, laptops
- **Resources for the online version:** an online platform with breakout rooms, virtual brainstorming boards (e.g. Padlet, Zoom whiteboard)
- **Description:**

(The whole activity can be conducted online in an asynchronous mode or onsite.)

The facilitator divides the whole group into four teams. The first task is to debate about how HEIs can tackle barriers to community building and sense of belonging with consideration of students who come from more sensitive/vulnerable backgrounds. Each team is assigned a topic to discuss, e.g. refugees, international students, working students, or students with disabilities. Further, the teams present a summary of the main points of the debate, which will serve as a basis for creating a theoretical roadmap for building an inclusive and safe university. For that purpose, the facilitator randomly assigns the participants to one of the four teams formed for the debate *(it is optimal if the students join a different group than the one they represented during the debate)*. The goal is for each team to design a roadmap for one of the previously mentioned topics, taking into consideration the following aspects:

- welcoming, inclusion and safety,
- participation in extracurricular activities,
- skill development and making their voice heard within the university.

The teams then briefly present the roadmaps and receive feedback from the facilitator and the rest of participants. Then, the students are mixed up again and continue working on another roadmap, so that each participant gains a multitude of perspectives. At the final stage, the roadmaps are presented to the whole workshop group.

- **Additional tips and comments:** The final presentation of the roadmaps can be conducted in front of the institution's authorities, during a student union assembly, or on another occasion that gathers decision-makers responsible for the topics connected with the content of the activity.

An example outcome of this activity is presented An example outcome of the activity Active Students For (More) Community In Universities

Department Design Task

- **Goals of the activity:** knowledge synthesis, collecting reflections and ideas from participants, practising teamwork and analysing group processes
- **Time of the activity:** 120 minutes
- **Resources for the offline version:** instructions, flipcharts, markers
- **Resources for the online version:** an online platform with breakout rooms, virtual brainstorming boards (e.g. Padlet, Zoom whiteboard)

- **Description:**

To complete this task, the facilitator should first conduct an exercise presenting their institution, e.g.: [University as a Supportive Institution](#) mentioned above. It is important that the participants have knowledge about key areas of the university's activities – opportunities for active participation and services offered to students. In the next step, the facilitator divides the participants randomly into groups of 5–6 people (→ *online version: breakout rooms*) and presents them with a hypothetical scenario of taking a leadership role in the “International Cooperation Division”. The participants are asked to create the concept for an innovative and influential institutional unit that will aim to provide significant support to the international community in the university environment. The main goal of the joint effort is to develop a centralised departmental structure. The instructions should emphasise the importance of focusing on providing comprehensive support to the international community. The time to complete this task is 30 minutes.

The participants are given flipcharts and asked to elaborate on the aspects presented in the following table (→ *online version: working on a shared document*):

Operational Plan
<i>Outline the core focus and the workflow of your department. Clearly define the services that it will offer. Describe the operational structure and processes that will enable your department to effectively accomplish its mission.</i>
Target Audience
<i>Discuss the intended recipients of your services.</i>
Financing
<i>Your department has been allocated (enter the budget amount here) for a year of operation. Distribute this funding carefully, considering that energy and rent expenses are already covered by the university. Additionally, you have been provided with an empty room for your department's employees.</i>
Personnel and Human Resources
<i>Define the staffing requirements for your department, specifying the roles and responsibilities of each team member.</i>
Public Relations (PR)
<i>Develop a PR strategy for promoting your department. This should encompass key elements such as branding, communication channels, and promotional activities.</i>
Cooperation and Project Management
<i>Outline strategies for collaboration with other departments and organisations. Define project management methodologies for your department's operations.</i>
Higher Goals and Values
<i>Articulate the overarching goals and values that your department represents. Explain how your department embodies and upholds the following values in its activities: diversity, sustainability, gender matters, equality, other.</i>

After completing the task, the participants present the results. The facilitator should encourage the students to engage in active dialogue, ask questions, comment and add ideas together. After the presentations, there is time for final reflections. Under the facilitator's supervision, the participants analyse their teamwork. The students explore the effectiveness of communication, collective creativity, collaborative dynamics, individual contributions, diverse leadership styles, and collective resilience.

In the online version of the task: All participants return from breakout rooms. Each group shares their work on the screen and talks about it. After the presentations, there is time for questions, discussion and reflections.

While the Creative Challenge task regarding a safe space for active participation is intended to stimulate creative thinking and enable reflection sharing, a task such as Department Design also helps to acquire knowledge about project work, as well as institutional management and operation. In the case of longer workshops, an interesting and effective solution is to use both activities.

Upon completing this module, the student:

- Knows institutional offices and units that support students in different matters.
- Knows the basics of creating a student-led initiative.
- Initiates activities for the academic community.
- Is able to brainstorm and create solutions within a diverse team.
- Recognises and understands the need to create and implement initiatives within the academic community.
- Recognises the meaningfulness of getting involved.
- Is motivated to create and implement activities aimed at enhancing the academic community.
- Is motivated to participate in extracurricular activities aimed at developing the institutional community.
- Understands the importance of networks within the institution in the context of self-development and peer support.

Skills Development Module

While the Skills Development Module could be centred around the development of various skills, the results of the report *University as community: students' perceptions of participation, engagement and belonging at European higher education institutions* suggest that what students find crucial is personal wellbeing and mental health. That is why the sections below gather tips for workshop scripts covering this area.

The Exploratory Module comprises the following activities:

- ➔ Stress Management in the Life of a University Student
- ➔ Self-care in the Context of Student Life and Active Participation

Stress Management in the Life of a University Student

- **Goals of the activity:** developing techniques for coping with stress that meet individual student needs, identifying one's own strengths and supporting the use of one's own resources in stress management, presenting the principles of sleep hygiene and time management
- **Time of the activity:** 150 minutes
- **Resources for the offline version:** space with good conditions for relaxation activities (*preferably not a lecture room*), materials requested by the lecturer, tables

- **Resources for the online version:** an online platform like Moodle
- **Description:**

Important: This type of workshops must be conducted by a psychologist/expert with knowledge of the topics covered.

The elements recommended for the workshops:

- A brief introduction to the concept of stress reaction and coping mechanism.
- Practical part of the workshops: finding one's own ways of/solutions for coping with stress effectively, including the awareness of one's own strengths.
- A brief introduction to sleep hygiene and time management.
- During the workshop, there should be space for the exchange of students' thoughts. The participants should have time to reflect on what they have learned in the context of students' lives and their experiences. There should also be time to ask questions to the trainer and verify students' knowledge.
- Short relaxation exercise at the end of the meeting, e.g. breathing techniques that help restore balance when feeling overstimulated or stressed.

In the online version of the task: The online workshop should contain all crucial elements, i.e. presentations and practical tasks.

Students can also work on their own gratitude diaries,

extend their own resources for stress coping mechanisms, and then discuss them online with the trainer.

- **Additional tips and comments:** The results of these workshops can be further developed in the student's life as an individual self-care plan. Another result of this workshop can be a "first aid guide" to self-care in the context of a university student's life created by the participants.

Self-care in the Context of Student Life and Active Participation

- **Goals of the activity:** expanding knowledge about emotions and stress, learning methods to regulate emotions and build resistance to stress, learning the basics of virtual hygiene
- **Time of the workshop:** 240 minutes
- **Resources for the offline version:** space with good conditions for relaxation activities (*preferably not a lecture room*), a laptop, a projector and a screen, materials requested by the lecturer
- **Resources for the online version:** an online platform with breakout rooms
- **Description:**

Important: This type of workshops must be conducted by a psychologist/expert with knowledge of the topics covered.

The elements recommended for the workshops:

- A short interactive lecture about the sources and functions of stress and emotions.
- Presentation of methods of coping with stress and excessive stimulation, e.g.: through discussion in subgroups and then among all participants.
- Introduction to the concept of resilience (*cognitive, social, emotional and physiological*) and self-care containing the following parts:
 - ◆ Emotional resilience: How to manage stress and emotions?
 - Mini-lecture: stress and emotion regulation strategies and relaxation techniques.
 - Task for participants based on situations from their experience.
 - ◆ Social resilience: Why do social support and positive feedback matter?
 - Mini-lecture: the importance of interpersonal relationships and positive feedback styles.
 - Task for participants: giving positive feedback.
 - ◆ Cognitive resilience: How to build optimism?
 - Mini-lecture: optimistic vs. pessimistic explanations of failures and successes.
 - Task for participants: finding alternative explanations.

- Task for participants: telling about one success and its internal causes.
 - ◆ Physiological resilience: How to be good for your body?
 - Demonstration of body-psyche connection.
 - Mini-lecture: the importance of physiological needs, wellbeing and virtual hygiene.
 - Task for participants: planning and sharing how to implement micro changes in lifestyle (*sleep, physical activity, mindfulness, etc.*)
- Discussion with participants on the self-care action plan for the near future.
- Summary

In the online version of the task: The online workshop should contain all crucial elements, i.e. presentations and practical tasks.

- **Additional tips and comments:** Similarly to the “Stress Management in the Life of a University Student” workshop, the result of these workshops may also be a “first aid guide” to self-care in the context of a student's life created by the participants.

In the Palacký University Olomouc post-workshop evaluation, the participants highlighted the role of yoga classes that were part of the workshop programme. The students appreciated the relaxing effects of yoga, as well as its good influence on the body and mind. Yoga classes are also popular among students at the University of Warsaw, where they can participate in occasional “Yoga for Dogs” events that combine relaxation activities with a charity initiative.



Palacký University students during a workshop within the UNICOMM Project

An example outcome of the activity [Active Students For \(More\) Community In Universities](#)

Action Plans on community building in higher education institutions – recommendations regarding working students, students with disabilities and refugee students

(created by the participants of ESU’s workshops: Victor, Maksim, Oleksandr, Elena, Katariina, Jens, Andrii, Magnus, Marious, Liliia, Elena, Ellie, Emma, Arno, Bendi, Daciana, Lisa, Jonathan, Yuri, Amanda, Maksim)

Working students

RECOMMENDATION	WHO?	HOW?
1. Accessibility of HEIs	Public authorities	Ensure that if new HEIs are created, strategic planning takes into account the needs of working students. This includes the need for HEIs not to be too far away from where students work, as well as accessibility through different means of transportation
	Public authorities & HEIs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide shuttle buses between different campus locations. • Implement bike sharing and rental opportunities. • Ensure accessibility of public transport, both regarding regular public transport connections and low-cost/student tickets.
2. Curriculum design/learning and teaching	Public authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legislation and/or clear guidelines defining student rights. • Forbidding mandatory attendance.

	HEIs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexible lectures. • Attendance needs to be non-mandatory. • Structure studies in a way that internships are included so that students know when they will have the time to do them (in connection to a less exam-heavy semester, for example). • All study materials must be accessible to everyone: syllabus, Powerpoints, reading lists, videos of lectures uploaded. • Exam flexibility: multiple options to take them (dates and hours). • Unlimited tries to retake exams. • Possibility to retake exams for better grades. • Exam dates need to be announced well in advance.
3. Financial support	Public authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create legislation ensuring proper working conditions for students. • Grant prolongation for being active in student unions / HEI governing structures / or having a job allows students to become fully engaged in the academic community. • Not linking the amount of money received from a scholarship to the income coming from a student job, as otherwise, the need to work simultaneously with studies increases, allowing for less time to engage in the academic and student community.
	HEIs	Student jobs created by HEIs, ensuring job opportunities close to learning facilities, embedding working students in the HEI environment.
4. Erasmus+ / Mobility schemes	Public authorities & EU	Provide sufficient grants so that working students can afford to take part in mobility programmes. Provide sufficient top-ups.
	HEIs & public authorities	Lining up academic semesters in different countries, as differences in the starting times of academic semesters make it harder to figure out students' employment situations.
5. Academic counselling	HEIs	Having regular check-ins with professors/teaching staff to reflect on how studies are going and if the path one is taking is suitable, esp. as many working students are first-generation students.
6. Recognition of extracurricular activities & prior/non-formal learning	HEIs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECTS points for being engaged in the academic community. • Having skills learned during work recognised officially by giving ECTS points or class exceptions.

7. Community building	HEIs & student unions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising awareness about working students and their needs and schedules. • Recognise the alienating effect academic discourse can have on first-generation students and take action not to directly or indirectly discriminate against students due to the way they express themselves.
	Student unions	<p>Events should not be only available on certain days, as students often have fixed time schedules and everyone has free time at different times (e.g. parties should not take place only on Fridays and Saturdays).</p> <p>Recognition of working students as a group of interest and ensuring representation of working students in student unions and HEIs.</p>
8. International students	Public authorities	<p>Enable full and equal access to the national labour market, as it is quite common for international students to have a limit on weekly working hours. This hinders their ability to cover their costs of living and alienates them.</p> <p>If students are required to work for a certain number of hours a week for study grants, visas, etc., this should also be recognised via language courses, community engagement, etc.</p>
	HEIs	<p>Provide language learning opportunities.</p> <p>Provide student job opportunities for foreign students, as this both supports them financially and includes them in the HEI setting. Create job opportunities where the national language is not a working language.</p>

Students with disabilities

RECOMMENDATION	WHO?	HOW?
1. Adequate funding for support measures for students with disabilities	Public authorities	Make use of the possibility to earmark money for students with disabilities and/or to tie additional resources to specific targets to be reached by HEIs.
	HEIs	Allocate sufficient funding & personnel for measures regarding students with disabilities.
2. Accessible facilities on & off campuses	Public authorities	Ensure that legislation regarding universally designed buildings, transportation digitalisation, etc. is written and followed.
	Student accommodation & other student service providers HEIs Student unions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that buildings are accessible in accordance with the principles of universal design. • Ensure that refurbishments and facilities are made accessible with lifts, space for wheelchairs, special parking spots, etc. • Ensure accessibility of buildings.
3. Accommodate the needs of students	Public authorities, HEIs & service providers	Provide learning aids & (technological) devices, e.g. software, technology, screen readers, dictaphones, note takers.
	Public authorities	Legislation on rights of students with disabilities incl. duties of HEIs, hardship clauses, etc. Clear guidelines on what “reasonable” accommodations are & how they can be achieved.

	HEIs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that all students have the same learning opportunities and that HEIs provide the support the students need. • Design of exams should accommodate the student and may diverge from the standard exams as long as the same learning outcomes are examined. • Ensure that all study programmes can be accessed by students with disabilities, esp. taking into consideration entry exams and curriculum design. • Ensure that workplace learning is accessible regardless of disability, e.g. by ensuring that spots are available and that workplace learning providers (companies, NGOs, etc.) are trained regarding the needs of students with disabilities.
4. Contact points	Public authorities	Legislation mandating HEIs to have contact points.
	HEIs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide resources, rooms, etc. for the contact points. • Raise awareness about disabilities and disseminate information. • Establish academic mentorship programmes where students can regularly discuss with their academic mentors (i.e. professors/teaching staff) how their studies and learning process are going, hence creating a direct connection between students and teaching staff.
	Student unions	Establish a committee where students with disabilities can turn to.
	HEIs & students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate to establish peer-led support groups to offer spaces for students with disabilities to talk and exchange experiences. • Create mentoring/buddy programmes, e.g. students supporting students with disabilities in their studies and day-to-day life on campus.
5. Staff training	Public authorities	Make legislation on mandatory inclusion training for HEI staff.
	HEIs	Provide training opportunities to all HEI staff to offer inclusive learning methods, use inclusive language, avoid discrimination, etc.

	Student unions	Raise awareness about students with disabilities and bring problems to the attention of the HEIs' decision-making bodies.
6. Inclusive activities & preventative activities	HEIs & student unions	<p>Ensuring that all activities students take part in, e.g. study-related field trips, festivities, parties, lectures, are accessible to all students.</p> <p>Offer activities and workshops with preventative character, e.g. on how to manage stress, organise one's studies, etc.</p>
7. Student representation	Student unions	Establish council meetings for students with disabilities to elect their delegates to represent their interests towards the student union & HEI.
8. Financial support	Public authorities & HEIs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that higher costs of living faced by many students with disabilities are covered (e.g. with specific scholarships or within the grant system). • Establish hardship regulations or similar measures to ensure access to financial support even if the studies take longer than usual etc. • Decrease paperwork and bureaucracy, e.g. regarding the provision of proof of disabilities.
9. Portability of students with disabilities' access to welfare services, etc.	EU member states, and other countries interested in the initiative	Ensure that the portability services of students with disabilities are covered by Erasmus+ and other student mobility schemes so that students can make use of these programs, e.g. through the European Disability Card.

Refugee students

RECOMMENDATION	WHO?	HOW?
1. Administrative aid and inclusive structures	Public authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simplified legislation for students to access refugee status. • Create 'students at risk' programmes. • Increase funding and thus spots for complementary pathways.
	NGOs & student organisations	Create information materials and provide support to refugee students who want to enrol in higher education.
2. Language barrier reducing	Public authorities	Provide financial resources to HEIs and cover the expenses of refugee students learning the national language of the host country.
	HEIs and student unions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer free language classes. • Provide all university services at least also in English, if possible, also in the native languages of students (esp. if there are larger refugee communities from certain language groups). • Create opportunities such as language cafés or language tandems to practise linguistic skills in non-formal settings.
3. Contact points	HEIs	Create a contact point knowledgeable on the topic of refugee students.
	Student unions	Establish a committee where refugee students can turn to.
	HEIs & students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish buddy/mentoring systems in which a local student can become the "buddy" for a refugee student. • Establish legal clinics through which professors guide law students and refugee students to offer free legal advice for refugee students (e.g. refugee law clinics).
4. Financial support	Public authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include refugee students in scholarship/ grant systems. • Delete fees for receiving administrative documents.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer refugee students a possibility to get a job under the same conditions as all students.
5. Recognition of prior non-formal, and formal learning	Public authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legislate the recognition of prior non-formal and formal learning from the refugee student's country of origin. • Implement the rights of refugees as defined in the Lisbon Recognition Convention, the Global Recognition Convention, and other relevant documents. • Promote the refugees' rights to recognition within the higher education sector through clear guidance on how to recognise learning, especially in the case of missing documents. • Ease the burdens regarding higher education entrance qualifications for refugees.
	HEIs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide support and guidance to refugees regarding the recognition of their prior non-formal, and formal education. • Promote internally and put as a standard the most accommodating and lenient way of recognition procedures. • Promote knowledge of the refugee students' rights regarding recognition procedures.
6. Student representation	Student organisations	Establish council meetings for refugee students to elect their delegates to represent their interests towards the student union & HEI.
7. Integration measures for social inclusion	HEIs, public authorities & other providers of student housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the light of the difficulties the refugee students face when obtaining all documents to be able to enter into a rental contract on the private market, places in public student housing facilities should be reserved for refugee students. • To promote the social inclusion of refugee students, they should be integrated into the general student population in student housing facilities. • Rental contracts should be signed in English apart from the original host country language, and so should any regulations on the use of housing facilities. • Provide dedicated support to help refugee students to find accommodation.
	HEIs & student unions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer specific cultural activities for refugee students, including those related to the traditions and background of their country of origin and host country, offering a space to exchange cultural diversity.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide socialising opportunities organised in HEIs/student union spaces, as well as trips in different parts of the HEI location to get to know other persons and the city. • Promote group work in classes as it allows students to get to know their fellow students.
8. Erasmus+ and other mobility schemes	Public authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enable refugee students and students in a refugee-like situation to access official identification papers to be able to benefit from mobility schemes. • Allow all students in a refugee-like situation to take part in mobility schemes. • Countries that have opted out from allowing refugees to take part in Erasmus+ in their country should opt in.
9. Staff training	Public authorities	Make legislation on mandatory anti-discrimination and anti-racism training for the staff.
	HEIs	Provide training opportunities to all HEI staff to deconstruct discriminatory and racist behaviours.
	Student unions	Raise awareness and bring problems to the attention of HEIs' decision-making bodies.

Additional tips

Tool for student self-assessment

The University of Applied Sciences Upper Austria has prepared a tool with which students can conduct a self-assessment to discover their strengths, personal challenges and strategies to improve their resilience and wellbeing. A good solution may be to use it in the initial phase of workshops or during pre-evaluation – the results may set the direction for joint work or constitute a separate topic of one of the workshops (e.g. *on personal wellbeing or mental resilience*).

[LINK TO THE TOOL](#)



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