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**Training and Realising Innovations  
in Internationalisation at Home Pedagogies**

**TRIP Project User Guide for Inclusive  
Internationalisation at Home**

**THE INTERCULTURAL VIRTUAL SOCIETAL CHALLENGE (IVSC)**

**E-MODULE TRAINING AND**

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## **PREFACE**

### **Introducing the TRIP Project**

This training guide seeks to provide a comprehensive account of the *Intercultural Virtual Societal Challenge (IVSC) E-MODULE* as one of several outputs of the Erasmus+ TRIP Project (2021-1-IE02-KA220-HED-000032151). TRIP stands for Training and Realising Innovations in Internationalisation at Home Pedagogies, and the TRIP project has developed an innovative and comprehensive framework and suite of training resources to support higher education institutions as they engage with internationalisation at home in their own educational settings.

For the purposes of the TRIP project, Internationalisation at Home (IaH) is understood as “the purposeful integration of international and intercultural dimensions into the formal and informal curriculum for all students within domestic learning environments” (Beelen & Jones 2015, p.69). This has become a key strategic priority for higher education across the globe; however, its development has been thwarted by a lack of a commonly understood strategy, formula or approach (Robson et al., 2017, p.20) and by a skills deficit and lack of engagement by academics and professional support staff (e.g. Egron-Polak and Hudson 2014, p. 68). While previous initiatives in this area have tended to focus on individual aspects of IaH, the TRIP approach has sought to develop a robust and fully comprehensive framework for developing innovative and sustainable IaH at all institutional levels to ensure maximum impact and long-standing benefits.

The rationale for our approach stems from the shared belief that universities have a responsibility to ensure the inclusion and well-being of all members of their campus communities as they internationalise and become more culturally diverse. The TRIP project members define a responsible international university (RIU) as one that systematically embeds internationalisation at home in ways that are inclusive across all aspects of university life. This calls for the purposeful integration of global and intercultural dimensions into the academic curriculum, teaching and learning activities, and professional services and supports to ensure that the diverse needs of all students and staff, domestic and international, are recognised and appropriately addressed. We believe that this approach can widen accessibility and inclusion in higher education in support of European Union educational policy and United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. This approach can also contribute to the development of the

essential transversal skills that are needed to foster global citizenship. We are committed to achieving these goals by developing and implementing a framework and quality assurance mechanism for self-evaluation and self-monitoring in the active pursuit of best practice in internationalisation at home.

The Intercultural Virtual Societal Challenge (IVSC) E-MODULE, which is presented in this guide, was designed to create opportunities for students to explore key societal challenges around the broad theme of inclusion and at the same time engage in problem-solving and intercultural and digital upskilling with peers from diverse partner institutions in European Union countries and in the Global South. We have developed the IVSC as a model of best practice in IaH that can be adapted and localised to suit different institutional priorities and needs. It also recognises that higher education institutions are at different stages of the IaH journey and that they have different levels of related knowledge and skills. by signalling where additional information can be found so that readers can engage with the content according to their own needs and interests and those of their institutions. It is also our intention in this guide to review and reflect on the experiences of those who participated in the IVSC E-MODULE piloting and implementation, highlighting challenges that were encountered along the way, and how they were addressed, as well as the benefits that accrued. In our concluding comments, we evaluate the extent to which the IVSC E-MODULE met with its overarching aim of offering students a high-quality international educational experience to empower them as global citizens at a time of growing political and economic instability, inequality and environmental challenge.

The TRIP Intercultural Virtual Societal Challenge E-MODULE model has been informed by published research and outputs associated with previous Erasmus KA2 projects, notably ATIAH<sup>1</sup>, EQUIIP<sup>2</sup>, and FRAMES<sup>3</sup> on which it seeks to build. It has also been shaped by the collective expertise, experiences and inter-institutional collaboration of the TRIP project partners and associate partners, as are listed below<sup>4</sup>:

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<sup>1</sup> See: <https://research.ncl.ac.uk/atiah/>

<sup>2</sup> See: <https://equiip.eu/>

<sup>3</sup> See: <https://frames-project.eu/>

<sup>4</sup> For more information on the TRIP Project partners, please see the TRIP website (<https://www.trip-project.eu/>)



University of Limerick (Ireland)  
Overall Project Coordinator

The University of Limerick (UL) is a comprehensive, public research university located in Limerick, on the west coast of Ireland. The university employs over 2,000 academic and professional support staff and currently has over 18,000 undergraduate and postgraduate students enrolled. Approximately 20% of the students attending the University of Limerick come from an international background.



Université Rennes 2 (France)

Co-coordinator of Intercultural Virtual Societal Challenge E-MODULE

University Rennes 2 (UR2) is a public university situated in Upper Brittany, France. Employing 1,740 academic and administrative staff, Rennes 2 provides education for 21,445 students at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels. The student body includes over 3,000 students with international backgrounds, accounting for approximately 14% of the student body.



Universidad Complutense Madrid (Spain)

Co-coordinator of Intercultural Virtual Societal Challenge E-MODULE

The Universidad Complutense de Madrid (UCM) is a public research university located in Madrid, Spain. The nearly 80,000 students enrolled at UCM are served by over 11,100 academic and professional support staff. 10.2% of the students at UCM are international.



Europa-Universität Flensburg (Germany)

Full Partner Member

The Europa-Universität Flensburg (EUF) is a public university in Flensburg, Germany. More than 660 academic and support staff are employed at the university, serving 5,775 students. Of the student body, 8.2% come from an international background.



Matej Bel University (Slovakia)

Full Partner Member

Matej Bel University (UMB) is a public research university located in Banska Bystrica, Slovakia. The 450 academic and support staff at UMB provide education for nearly 7,000 students. About 10% of students enrolled at UMB are international.



University of Tlemcen (Algeria)

Associate Partner Member



The University of Belkaïd Abou Bekr Tlemcen is a public university in Tlemcen, Algeria. More than 2,000 academic and support staff work at the University of Tlemcen, providing education for nearly 49,000 students of whom about 400 come from international backgrounds.



University of the Western Cape (South Africa)  
Associate Partner Member

The University of the Western Cape (UWC) is a public research university in Bellville, South Africa. Approximately 5,200 academic and professional support staff are employed by UWC, with over 23,000 students enrolled. More than 1,400 of these students are international.

Figure 1 illustrates the geographical locations of the five, full partners and two associate partners who participated in the Erasmus + TRIP project.



*Figure 1: The TRIP Project Full and Associate Partners by Geographical Location*

## **Structure and Content of Training Guide**

The structure of this training guide is set out below with a brief summary of the content of each Section so that readers can decide how they wish to engage with this resource in terms of the order of reading of the content. Links are also provided for further reading where relevant.

[Section One](#) of this guide outlines the approach taken by the TRIP IaH project partners, setting out the guiding principles and goals of the project which were embedded and addressed across the various outputs, including in the IVSC, which is the focus of this training guide.

[Section Two](#) details the aims, design, and learning outcomes of the Intercultural Virtual Societal Challenge (IVSC) E-MODULE. It also highlights how the IVSC embodies and promotes a challenge-based teaching and learning approach and the ways in which this approach can be adapted.

[Section Three](#) describes the methodology for delivery of the IVSC E-MODULE content, and the embedded quality assurance mechanisms.

[Section Four](#) presents feedback and reflective case studies of the IVSC throughout the three phases of piloting, highlighting the learning gained.

[Section Five](#) offers conclusions and recommendations in relation to the IVSC experience and explores future directions.

[Section Six](#) contains the appendices relating to the IVSC design model and methodology.

# **SECTION ONE: OVERVIEW OF THE GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND GOALS OF THE TRIP PROJECT**

## **1.0 Overview**

In this Section, we set out the principles and goals that have provided the overarching framework for the TRIP IaH approach as these have shaped the overall project approach and the design and methodology of the three key project outputs<sup>5</sup>. This includes the Intercultural Virtual Societal Challenge E-MODULE which is the focus of this training guide.

## **1.1 TRIP Project Guiding Principles and Goals**

The TRIP project design and methodology reflects a principled, evidence-based approach that has as its overriding aim to support core EU and UN values and goals, and in particular SDG4 which speaks to ensuring “inclusive and equitable

quality education and promoting life-long learning opportunities for all, eliminating all discrimination in education and providing education for sustainable development and global citizenship<sup>6</sup>. The TRIP approach also seeks to take account of the inclusive educational philosophy and practices associated with Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and seeks to embed and expand these to take account of additional intercultural dimensions at the level of curriculum design, classroom pedagogies, and communication practices so we are better equipped to address the more complex challenges and opportunities that internationalisation and increasing cultural diversity are bringing to HE. This is achieved by combining UDL with Culturally Responsive Teaching which is a key innovation of the TRIP approach. The TRIP project design and methodology were informed by a thorough review of the academic literature alongside an extensive mapping and analysis of our own institutional IaH policies, goals, priorities and concerns, which revealed a number of key issues and challenges which we have sought to address in the project outputs.

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<sup>5</sup> See: <https://www.cast.org/impact/universal-design-for-learning-udl>

<sup>6</sup> SDG goal 4: ‘Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all’ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal4>

The UDL framework is a set of principles for curriculum development that give all individuals equal opportunities to learn. UDL aims to improve the educational experience of all students by introducing more flexible methods of teaching, assessment and service provision to cater for the diversity of learners in our classrooms. This approach is underpinned by research in the field of neuroscience and is designed to improve the learning experience and outcomes for all students. It achieves these outcomes by acknowledging the uniqueness of each student, and through:

- 1) Multiple means of engagement - stimulation of motivation and sustained enthusiasm for learning by promoting various ways of engaging with material;
- 2) Multiple means of representation - presentation of information and content in a variety of ways to support understanding by students with different learning styles/abilities;
- 3) Multiple means of action/expression - offering options for students to demonstrate their learning in various ways (e.g., allowing choice of assessment type).

Although UDL was designed with a focus on inclusion for students with disabilities, its guiding principles can be applied in conjunction with strategies associated with CRT to foster the inclusion of all students in diverse classroom settings, regardless of ability, gender, race, origin, or any other facet of student identity (see sections 2.3 and 2.7 of this training guide for more information on how UDL informs this IVSC E-MODULE).<sup>7</sup>

Our institutional mapping exercise revealed that while all TRIP partner institutions had existing policies for internationalisation, not all member policies had developed a specific strategy for IaH. Moreover, although equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) policies were found to be present in the TRIP partner institutions, these were not always inclusive of categories such as race or asylum seekers. Connections between internationalisation and EDI were also not always evident in policy, sometimes leaving the rights and needs of international members of the university community unaddressed. As far as the professional development needs of teaching and support staff were concerned, it revealed that existing training did not always address EDI

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<sup>7</sup> See Appendix 3: [TRIP Expands UDL to IaH to Create an Inclusive Approach](#)

or internationalisation goals, was typically non-mandatory, and saw low levels of uptake. However, intercultural training for staff and students was found to be in the planning or early implementation stages but had yet to be fully implemented at any member institution. Meanwhile, while staff generally acknowledged the importance of internationalisation at their respective institutions and were aware of (often increasing) diversity in their universities, they did not always have a clear understanding of IaH and its connection to their practices or to EDI or the UN SDGs in particular.

Therefore, the needs analysis and findings pointed to the need for a comprehensive and overarching IaH framework that would take the form of an all- encompassing tripartite action model to build inclusive internationalisation at the macro, meso, and micro institutional levels:

At the **macro level** (institutional and societal), robust and sustainable policies and systems must be put in place at HEIs, enabled by a comprehensive, transnationally accepted definition of a responsible, international university; a toolkit for HEIs to develop inclusive IaH; and a Certificate in Quality Assured IaH.

At the **meso level**, staff at HEIs (including academic and support staff) require upskilling in inclusive IaH through raising awareness of diversity; improving intercultural communication; designing, teaching, and assessing in an internationalised HEI; and developing pedagogical skills for inclusive education.

At the **micro level**, this led to the design of the IVSC E-MODULE for students with a focus on intercultural awareness raising around the key themes of environment, gender equality, and race equality.

The overarching principles and goals of the TRIP project approach and the IVSC E-MODULE for students are as follows:

- 1) to support EDI and SDG4 as core values and goals;
- 2) to reinforce UDL and combine it with CRT to address inclusive IaH;
- 3) to recognise diversity of learning needs, abilities and styles and to ensure education is accessible and inclusive for all;
- 4) to develop transformative educational policies, practices and systems;
- 5) to promote critical thinking to challenge groupthink and prevailing dogma;

- 6) to promote innovation in curriculum and materials design;
- 7) to enhance intercultural understanding and intercultural communication skills;
- 8) to create opportunities for foreign language learning;
- 9) to empower learners to address real-world problems through involvement in challenge-based education;
- 10) to promote collaboration and teamwork for shared knowledge construction;
- 11) to advance digital literacy and skills;
- 12) to offer flexibility to suit different higher education contexts and needs;
- 13) to promote sustainability through a train-the-trainer approach to ensure capacity building;
- 14) to involve and provide benefits for the wider community in terms of outcomes.

These overarching principles and goals are summarised in Figure 2:



*Figure 2: Principles and goals of the TRIP approach*

## **1.2 Summary**

In this Section, we have presented the principles and goals that the TRIP project sought to embody and address, highlighting how they are reflected in the IVSC E-MODULE in particular. In Section Two, we focus on the design of the IVSC E-MODULE and the considerations and criteria involved.

## **SECTION TWO: DESIGNING THE TRIP INTERCULTURAL VIRTUAL SOCIETAL CHALLENGE E-MODULE**

### **2.0 Overview**

In this Section we provide a detailed description and rationale in relation to the IVSC E-MODULE design. We begin by outlining the aims and learning outcomes that are associated with the module, and we then critically review the challenge-based teaching and learning framework on which it is based. From this, we discuss the thematic content areas that are focused on, how the E-MODULE is structured and can be delivered, the types of tasks that students are engaged in and the associated assessment and grading criteria. Along the way, we also discuss the types of considerations and challenges that arose at the design stage and how these were addressed. The E-MODULE design was shaped by the principles and goals that were highlighted in Section One of this training guide and it was also informed by the experiences and feedback of the teaching staff and students who were involved in its development and piloting across the five participating HE institutions and the associate partner universities. It is important to re-emphasise at this stage that we have endeavoured to embed flexibility and sustainability into the design to enable other HEIs to adapt it to suit their own IaH needs and ambitions and to ensure that it leads to outcomes that are enduring and impactful in terms of their benefits for the individuals involved, the participating institutions and the wider community.

### **2.1 Aims, Learning Competencies and Learning Outcomes**

The aim of the TRIP *Intercultural Virtual Societal Challenge* (IVSC) E-MODULE is to create at-home opportunities for students at all levels to critically explore key societal challenges and to empower them to contribute to positive change by involving them in Challenge-based learning (CBL) with peers from different cultural backgrounds and in digital upskilling. The two key areas of transversal upskilling are intercultural competence and communication skills and a range of digital skills (as highlighted below in Sections 2.3 and 2.6). Throughout the E-MODULE, students are also encouraged to actively investigate these challenges from cross-cultural perspectives drawing on a wide and diverse range of sources, and to liaise (e.g., visits/discussions) with relevant community-based organisations.



Through their active engagement in the IVSC E-MODULE, it is intended that students will develop transversal skills in areas such as critical thinking, intercultural understanding, research and digital literacy alongside as well as an enhanced capacity for openness, inter-cultural sensitivity, empathy and awareness of self and others. Specifically, by the end of the module, it is expected that students should be able to:

- demonstrate a critical, cross-cultural and intercultural understanding of the theme;
- develop and rationalise an approach to address a related challenge;
- outline the values and principles that have shaped their approach and how it can support EDI and the UN's SDGs;
- search for, identify and exploit sources of help, information, and resources to address the challenge;
- demonstrate a capacity for empathy in relation to the issues raised;
- upskill digitally in the use of communication and media creation tools;
- demonstrating an understanding of community and societal challenges;
- evaluate their own contribution and that of team members to address the challenge they have identified and investigated.

## **2.2 IC Virtual Communication Skills and Digital Upskilling in IVSC Modules**

### **Effective Interpersonal Communication (IC)**

Effective Interpersonal Communication (IC) is a vital skill in today's interconnected world. It involves the ability to convey ideas, information, and emotions clearly and efficiently, whether through verbal or written means. In a professional setting, effective IC is essential for building strong relationships, fostering collaboration, and resolving conflicts. Key components of effective IC include active listening, empathy, clarity, and adaptability in tailoring messages to different audiences.

The IVSC gives students the opportunity to develop IC skills: in the workshops, students will focus on various aspects, such as active listening exercises, presentation preparation, and feedback sessions. Additionally, incorporating digital communication tools like video

conferencing, instant messaging platforms, and email effectively can further improve IC in virtual environments.

## **IC Skills in a Virtual Learning Environment**

In a virtual learning environment, particular IC skills are needed to ensure effective communication. As more organizations adopt remote work arrangements and virtual collaboration tools, mastering these skills has become essential for maintaining productivity and connectivity. Key virtual communication skills include clarity in written messages, proper etiquette in video conferencing, managing time zones, and utilizing collaboration platforms effectively.

In IVSC workshops, participants have the opportunity to develop IC skills for virtual learning environments through engaging in virtual communication sessions. These sessions are designed to encompass various aspects, including best practices for online meetings, valuable tips for effective email communication, and strategies to foster engagement and interaction within virtual environments. Additionally, participants are encouraged to hone their ability to communicate clearly and concisely in chat-based platforms, as this skill greatly contributes to fostering effective virtual collaboration.

## **IC Competencies**

IC competencies encompass a range of abilities and knowledge necessary to excel in professional and personal interactions. These competencies include emotional intelligence, cultural awareness, conflict resolution, problem-solving, and adaptability. Emotional intelligence plays a crucial role in understanding and managing emotions, both in oneself and others, leading to improved communication and relationship-building.

Cultural awareness is vital in diverse environments, as it allows individuals to navigate cross-cultural interactions respectfully and avoid misunderstandings. Conflict resolution skills empower individuals to address disagreements constructively and find mutually beneficial solutions. Strong problem-solving abilities enable individuals to tackle challenges creatively and efficiently, while adaptability ensures one can adjust to changing circumstances and communicate effectively in various situations.

## **IC Challenges**

Despite the benefits of digital upskilling and IC, several challenges may arise. Some common IC challenges include misinterpretation of messages in virtual communication due to the absence of non-verbal cues, difficulties in building rapport in remote teams, and potential distractions in online environments. Technical issues with digital tools and platforms can also hinder smooth communication and collaboration.

To address these challenges, individuals and organizations can adopt strategies like providing clear guidelines for virtual communication, encouraging regular video calls to promote face-to-face interaction, and investing in reliable and user-friendly digital tools. Training programs that focus on overcoming virtual communication barriers and building cohesive remote teams can significantly improve IC in digital settings.

In conclusion, mastering digital upskilling and IC skills is essential in today's fast-paced and technology-driven world. By empowering individuals with the necessary competencies and tools, organizations can enhance productivity, collaboration, and overall success. Overcoming the challenges associated with virtual communication allows individuals to capitalize on the benefits of digital upskilling and leverage these skills to excel in their personal and professional endeavours.

## **IVSC Digital Upskilling**

The IVSC training program incorporates a common objective of digital upskilling across its four distinct thematic strands, which share a structural foundation.

Digital upskilling refers to the process of acquiring or improving digital skills, knowledge, and competencies to effectively navigate and utilize digital technologies and tools. In today's increasingly digitalized world, digital upskilling has become crucial for individuals and organizations to remain competitive, adapt to technological advancements, and enhance productivity. Digital upskilling encompasses a wide range of abilities, including proficiency in using software applications, digital communication tools, information sourcing, cybersecurity practices, and other digital technologies relevant to specific roles and industries. It empowers IVSC participants to harness the full potential of digital resources and effectively participate in the IVSC.

The two key overarching transversal learner competencies are:

- 1) Intercultural competence and communication skills, and;
- 2) Digital upskilling.

In the following Section, we review the core features and goals of CBL highlighting the reasons why this approach was selected for the IVSC E-MODULE and the core elements that were embedded into the IVSC design and implementation methodology (see Section 3).

### **2.3 The Challenge-Based Learning Approach**

Challenge-based learning can be described as a multidisciplinary approach to teaching and learning that encourages students to use research, reflection, and technology in their everyday lives to solve real-world problems<sup>8</sup>. It is a collaborative and hands-on approach where students work with peers, teachers, and experts to ask meaningful questions, deepen their knowledge in a specific field, accept and overcome challenges, take action, and share their experiences.<sup>9</sup>

When selecting a learning approach that best fit the needs of the IVSC E-MODULE, several approaches were evaluated, including CBL. The key evaluation criteria that were utilised in the selection of a learning approach were that it be student-centred, designed with implementation in a virtual environment and that it aligns with the principles and goals of the TRIP project as outlined in the preface of this training guide. Out of the several approaches evaluated by a project partner informed by prior experiences in developing and implementing virtual exchanges<sup>10</sup>, the CBL approach was deemed the best fit for the IVSC E-MODULE.

The approach emphasizes the following key aspects:

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<sup>8</sup> Gallagher, S.E. and Savage, T., 2020. Challenge-based learning in higher education: an exploratory literature review. *Teaching in Higher Education*, pp.1-23. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2020.1863354>

<sup>9</sup> See Appendix 4: [Challenge-based Learning Origins and Development](#)

<sup>10</sup> See Chapter 4 of this training guide for case studies that informed the learning approach evaluation and selection.

1. **Multidisciplinary perspectives and transversal skills development:** CBL requires students to apply a range of skills, both thematic and generic, to solve problems in their daily lives.
2. **Student-centred approach:** Unlike traditional learning (Prosser, 2010<sup>11</sup>), CBL places students at the centre and promotes small group work. Students take ownership of their challenges, choose the problems they want to address and fulfil their responsibilities within their teams.
3. In CBL, the role of teachers is different from that in traditional learning. They are facilitators who help students to find, investigate and implement their challenges.
4. **Focus on challenges:** Challenges serve as the central organizing element and the catalyst for learning in CBL.

Historically, CBL has utilised a three-stage approach<sup>12</sup>:

- 1) **Engage:** Learners transform their abstract, big ideas into practical and actionable challenges. The main objective is to establish a link between academic content and personal engagement through the identification and development of a challenge.
- 2) **Investigate:** During the Investigate phase, learners build upon the challenges they identified in the Engage phase by creating contextualized learning experiences. They conduct in-depth, content-focused research to lay the groundwork for actionable and sustainable solutions.
- 3) **Act:** In the Act phase, learners take evidence-based solutions, developed during the Investigation phase, and put them into action while engaging with a real and authentic audience. This phase involves a combination of a genuine desire to create a positive impact and a demonstration of their mastery of the subject matter.

For the IVSC E-MODULE, a fourth stage has been added:

- 4) **Evaluate:** In the Evaluate stage, as part of the assessment, learners are required to assess the appropriacy, efficacy, and sustainability of solutions they have put into action during the Act phase. At the Act stage, there are also opportunities for students to review and

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<sup>11</sup> Prosser, M. (2010). Faculty research and teaching approaches: Exploring the relationship. In Christensen Hughes, J & Mighty, J (eds.) Taking stock: Research on teaching and learning in higher education, Montreal & Kingston, Ontario, Canada: McGill-Queen's University Press.

<sup>12</sup> See the following video for an explanation of the three stages:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MyiFPIJivPY>

give feedback on each other's work before the final assessment. Evaluating the results of the previous three stages allows students to address the feedback they have received from peers and any issues they have identified themselves. Students are also represented on the final Evaluation Panel (see details in section 3.1).

The cyclical nature of this modified four-step CBL process can be visualised as follows:

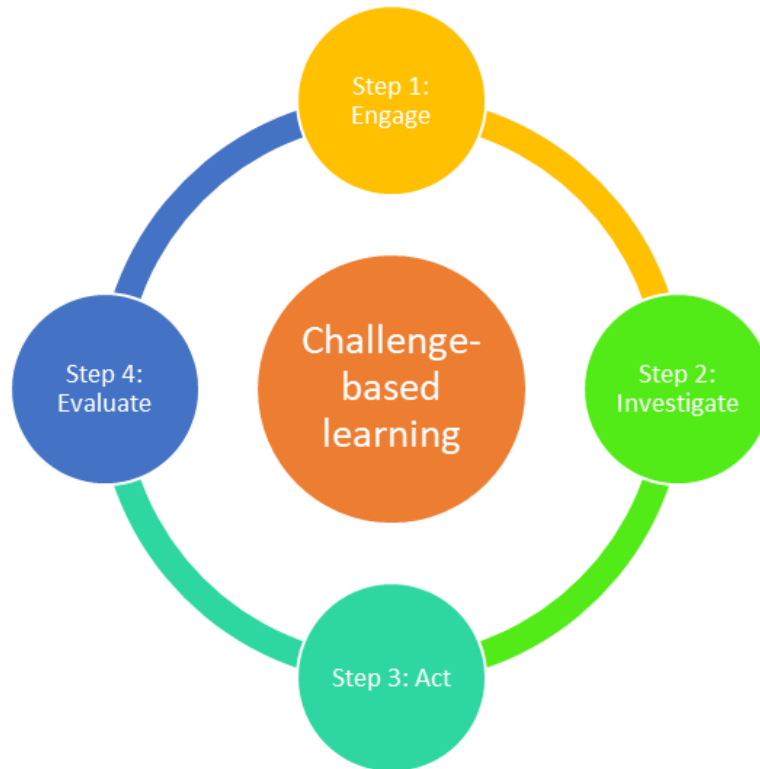


Figure 3: Stages of the adapted Challenge-based Learning approach

Thus, due to its student-centred focus, potential for interactivity and suitability for virtual exchange, Challenge-Based Learning fits the model of what TRIP wishes to achieve by bringing students, teachers, and community together in a collaborative manner. The challenge-based approach that informs all aspects of teaching and learning relating to the E-MODULE is therefore one which fosters collaboration and real-world problem-solving skills. It also gives students the opportunity to upskill by working together in peer groups in an international context. This allows students to build skills and competencies through teamwork and transnational collaboration.

The IVSC model relies on the delineation of distinct roles, which will be expounded upon in Section Three of this guide which deals with the IVSC methodology.

## 2.4 Virtual Exchange as a Tool for Mobility

The EU and the Erasmus+ Programme advocate for mobility as a key objective, a means of promoting cooperation, quality, inclusion, creativity and innovation while overcoming barriers such as disabilities, health problems, cultural differences, economic, social, and geographical barriers, and discrimination based on age, gender, ethnicity, religion, beliefs, sexual orientation, or other elements of an individual's identity and circumstance<sup>13</sup>. To further these goals, Erasmus+ has embraced virtual exchanges as tools for facilitating these objectives without requiring physical mobility<sup>14</sup>. Investigations of virtual exchanges for language learning have shown them to give learners more awareness of culture than can be learned through traditional resources, greater pragmatic competence in foreign languages, deeper exploration of culture through contact with authentic informants, and a fuller grasp of the complexity of cultural systems<sup>15</sup>. However, virtual exchanges are not limited to language learning contexts, and their broader value has become more apparent in the wake of the global COVID-19 pandemic:

Digital platforms represent a valuable tool in partially answering the global constraints on mobility caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Virtual exchanges also help spreading European values. Moreover, in some cases they can prepare, deepen and extend physical exchanges, as well as fuel new demand for them.

[\(Virtual Exchanges in higher education and youth |](#)

[Erasmus+\)](#)

The IVSC E-MODULE aims to make best use of this tool in order to facilitate IaH without the need to physically travel, opening the door to mobility for participants who might not otherwise have access to such opportunities due to any number of barriers to physical mobility.

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<sup>13</sup> See: <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/programme-guide/part-a>

<sup>14</sup> See: <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/programme-guide/part-b/key-action-1/virtual-exchanges>

<sup>15</sup> O'Dowd, R. and Dooly, M., 2020. Intercultural communicative competence development through telecollaboration and virtual exchange. *The Routledge handbook of language and intercultural communication*, pp.361-375.

## 2.5 IVSC E-MODULE Thematic Content

The areas of thematic content included in the IVSC were chosen which relate to areas of societal challenge which are referred to in the UN SDGs (see Figure 3):

- 1) THE ENVIRONMENT
- 2) GENDER
- 3) RACE
- 4) INCLUSION

The first three themes encompass transversal societal challenges that underscore the importance of inclusion as a fundamental aspect of societal progress and the need for an open-minded and accepting stance towards diversity. This approach allowed for related sub-themes to be focused on, as and where students' interests lay, in areas such as climate justice, environmental disasters, gender discrimination, and racism. The fourth theme of inclusion can be embraced as a unifying theme that encompasses multiple thematic areas in an intersectional manner. For instance, the concept of sustainability cannot be perceived in isolation from gender and race issues, as the degradation of the environment significantly contributes to discriminatory experiences faced by various minority groups. By acknowledging these interconnected relationships, the theme of inclusion serves as a bridge, linking different dimensions of diversity and promoting a more holistic approach.

Thus, the fourth subject introduces increased flexibility to the thematic areas, as it offers the potential for an intersectional approach. As the model evolves, there is also the potential for additional themes to be added.



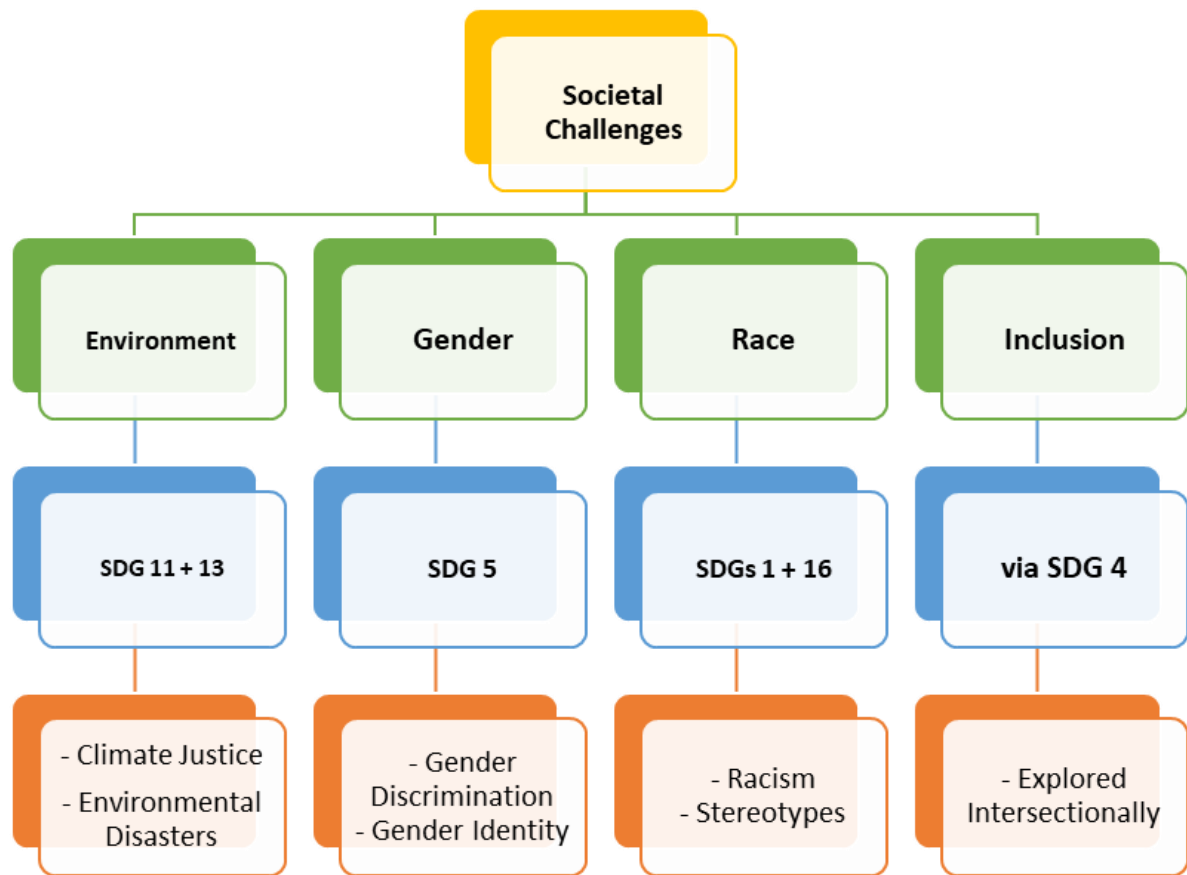


Figure 4: E-MODULE Thematic Content Areas (Main Themes and Potential Subthemes)

The thematic areas under consideration align with specific Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): sustainability primarily corresponds to SDGs 11 and 13, gender equality is associated with SDG 5, and race equality is linked to SDGs 10 and 16. The overarching framework adopted in these themes reflects the principles enshrined in SDG 4, which focuses on ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education. For an example of how one of these thematic areas would be addressed in the E-MODULE, see Section 2.5, which situates the theme of gender in the IVSC E-MODULE structure.

In addition to the aforementioned themes, there exists the potential to complement them with other thematic areas that address inclusion and contemporary societal challenges, as noted previously. For instance, the theme of poverty, which pertains to SDG 1, could be integrated to further enrich the comprehensive approach towards fostering inclusivity.

## TRIP Approach to Materials Design and Development

In line with the principles and goals of the project set out in Section One of this training guide, the thematic material design and development was influenced by principles outlined by Tomlinson<sup>16</sup>, specifically: materials should be authentic, help learners notice authentic features, provide opportunities for feedback, “arouse and sustain learners’ curiosity and attention, and Stimulate intellectual, aesthetic and emotional involvement” (p.82).

The design of all content and materials should reflect the following criteria. They should be:

- Inclusive, accessible and reflective of the principles of UDL and CRT (see Section 1.1)<sup>17</sup>;
- Varied, which can be existing and adapted to TRIP, or new materials - articles, lecture slides, videos, podcasts;
- Critically-oriented, to support critical thinking development;
- Cross-cultural in perspective to create opportunities for upskilling in intercultural competence;
- Informative, engaging and aesthetically appealing<sup>18</sup>, and of a high quality;
- Evocative of an effective response (empathy, values & openness through representation for all, to increase memorability);
- Adaptable, to ensure sustainability of these teaching resources;
- Reflective of the CBL approach (create opportunities for interaction, high level of student involvement and opportunities for students to articulate views and perspectives);

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<sup>16</sup> Tomlinson, B. (2010). Principles and procedures of materials development. In N. Harwood (Ed.) *Materials in ELT: Theory and practice* (pp. 81-108). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>17</sup> See Appendix: [Trip Expands UDL to IaH to Create an Inclusive Approach](#)

<sup>18</sup> Uhrmacher, P.B. (2009) ‘Toward a Theory of Aesthetic Learning Experiences’, *Curriculum inquiry*, 39(5), 613–636, available: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-873X.2009.00462.x>.

- Exploitative of opportunities for foreign language learning regardless of subject.

In this IVSC E-MODULE, quality assurance mechanisms were embedded into the content and materials design process to ensure that the materials met the criteria listed previously. This was achieved by appointing academics with experience in materials design and development as Inclusion Officers who were tasked with evaluating the suitability of all content materials used in the IVSC E-MODULE, at the design, piloting and implementation stages with review and feedback at each stage from participants (see links to appendices).

## **2.6 IVSC E-MODULE Core Content and Delivery**

### **IVSC E-MODULE Structure**

There are five key elements to the core content of the IVSC E-MODULE, which broadly allow for the CBL approach/process to be applied (ENGAGE, INVESTIGATE, ACT and EVALUATE)<sup>19</sup>. Below is an example of how the ten hours per theme of student contact can be delivered taking into account the CBL approach (see Figure 4), while also addressing the key learner competencies: intercultural competence and communication skills, as well as digital upskilling<sup>20</sup>. The following five learning blocks consist of approximately two hours each. We recommend that, at the very least, five two-hour sessions are needed to cover the core content, but it may be more appropriate to deliver the content over an extended number of weeks depending on the time available and the abilities of the students.

- Session 1 - ENGAGE: It is important that in session 1, students are introduced to the following areas and given some initial digital and intercultural training:
  - Intro to CBL+VE
  - All students together from all partners involved (meet and greet)
  - Review learning outcomes and assessment
  - Overview of 4 themes + introduction of specific theme

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<sup>19</sup> See CBL approach in Section 2.2

<sup>20</sup> For more detailed information on how digital upskilling might be embedded into each of the learning blocks, see Appendix 5: [Digital Upskilling Embedded into Five Sessions of IVSC E-MODULE](#)

- Digital Skills Task 1 (30 minutes) - digital and intercultural upskilling (creating protocols/netiquette)
- Please note, the intercultural or digital upskilling can take place over two sessions, depending on the abilities of the group and the overall duration agreed with partners
- Session 2 - INVESTIGATE: Thematic development 1 - Based on challenge agreed in Session 1 (assess scope of what is possible):
  - Overview of challenge and macro-level input
  - Assigning roles to students
  - Brainstorm and do preliminary research
  - Digital Skills Task 2 (30 minutes)
- Session 3 - INVESTIGATE: Thematic development 2 - By end of session 3 students:
  - Identify specific area of challenge and research action plan
  - Must include a community element (e.g., a visit or online conversation with an NGO)
  - Digital Skills Task 3 (30 minutes)
- Session 4 - ACT: Preparation for assessment and related digital upskilling
  - Introduction to challenge-based assessment task (e.g., a video)
  - How to make a video (flexible for assessment type)
- Session 5 - EVALUATE: Presentation of student work for evaluation
  - present videos and summary already submitted to panel
  - each student discuss one area of questioning
  - cyclical - leads to new challenge to ENGAGE



*Figure 5: Sessions delivered as five two-hour learning blocks*

These five sessions are designed to be delivered in different ways to enhance flexibility and adaptability. In terms of its overall workload and ECTS weighting, it involves a total of 40 contact hours, that is 10 for each thematic area, each worth 1 credit making an overall total of 4 ECTS credits. Students are also expected to work independently in their teams for a further 40 hours per module, that is 10 hours per theme.

The IVSC E-MODULE can also be run without allocating credits. In this case, an alternative way of rewarding students would be to award them with a digital certificate on successful completion of the module (see Appendix 6 for exemplar of digital certificate). It is important that the partner institutions agree the approach to ensure that all students working on an inter-institutional version of the IVSC are rewarded in the same way.

### **Flexibility of Delivery**

The module can be delivered intensively over a number of days, or less intensively over weeks or months depending on what is feasible in the partner institutions who must all agree on the best structure to suit their needs and how many thematic strands will be covered (see further details of flexible delivery options in Section 2.7). For example:

1. Over five weeks, e.g., 2 hours per week for one IVSC theme

2. Over a more extended period, e.g. up to eight weeks (In this case, the thematic content can be approach in greater detail. Additional intercultural and digital upskilling training can be provided, or you may wish to allocate an additional independent study week for the students to complete their assessment)
3. More intensively over a shorter period, e.g., as a 1-3 week summer school course
4. Over the course of a semester where it is embedded alongside existing module content

### **Example of 1 ECTS Strand of IVSC E-MODULE: Theme - Gender**

The following is an example of how an IVSC workshop can be delivered as a 1 ECTS portion of the total 3 ECTS module. In this case, we use the theme of gender as an example and show how the content can be delivered over five, two-hour classes.

1. Session 1: ENGAGE - Students are introduced to the module, the related outcomes and the required tasks and outputs. They are provided with an overview of the characteristics of virtual exchange and engage in initial intercultural skills training. Following this, they are introduced to the theme of the IVSC and the related materials and resources they can engage with outside of class time. Students are then grouped into teams and begin the first task, which is to brainstorm around the theme highlighting their own prior knowledge and areas of interest (Objective 1). Teams are required to identify a specific challenge they wish to engage with relating to the theme by the following session (Task 1).
2. Session 2: INVESTIGATE 1 - Introduce students to SDG 5: Gender equality/inequality. Teams present their chosen challenge to their peers and engage in a Q&A session. Teams proceed to design a team logo, applying suitable digital tools (Objective 2). This will support team building and create opportunities for digital upskilling. Teams are required to complete and submit the logo before the following session (Task 2).
3. Session 3: INVESTIGATE 2 - Students are introduced to methodologies and tools relating to researching and sourcing relevant information. Students may wish to liaise with a relevant local group or organisation, e.g., an NGO (please note – the project does

not require the formal gathering of data). They then design their approach (Objective 3). Teams are required to complete this by the following session (Task 3).

4. Session 4: ACT - Students are introduced to suitable tools and methodologies for the production of video and digital storytelling (e.g., PechaKucha) with a good example shown. Teams report back on their progress. They then start working on the design of the video and present and receive feedback from peers on their ideas (Objective 4). They are required to complete and submit the video and be ready to present it to peers and the Evaluation Panel in session 5.
5. Session 5: EVALUATE - Teams present their video production to peers and the Evaluation Panel for evaluation and they engage in a 10-minute question and answer the question as part of the assessment (Objective 5). See the methodology and criteria for assessment in section 2.8.

## **2.7 IVSC E-MODULE Delivery Options (Embedded or Stand-alone)**

The E-MODULE is delivered fully online and there is some flexibility as to how it can be offered, including the number of hours and whether it is delivered embedded into existing modules or as a stand-alone module. This will encourage greater uptake and engagement and maximize its potential impact and benefits, as is described below:

- i) **Option 1:** The E-MODULE can be embedded into a suitable, existing subject module, with between one and three thematic strands included, representing 1 to 4 ECTS credits. For instance, it can be integrated by thematic strand into modules where the focus is on language, culture, intercultural studies, European studies, or global citizenship, or in other discipline modules such as geography, sociology, history, politics, nursing, business and engineering.<sup>21</sup>
- ii) **Option 2:** The E-MODULE can be offered as a stand-alone module worth 4 ECTS credits in total and comprising all four thematic components. In this case, the various

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<sup>21</sup> For example, the 1 ECTS strand on the theme of gender outlined in Section 2.6 is well-suited to being embedded as part of a module, requiring five two-hour sessions over the course of a semester.

thematic strands, each worth 1 ECTS credit can be taken by semester or by year of the degree programme, as relevant; for instance, postgraduate students enrolled on a one-year degree programme can take one thematic strand per semester while undergraduates and PhD students, can take the various strands over a number of years according to the duration and structure of their programme.<sup>22</sup>

This approach offers academics and students greater flexibility and choice in terms of how they can engage with the E-MODULE across the various thematic areas. Additionally, it ensures a greater potential for capacity building to enhance the sustainability of the model. It will also provide a clear ECTS-based framework for the introduction of short-term blended mobility.

## **2.8 IVSC E-MODULE Student Challenge and Assessment Guidelines**

Students participating in the IVSC E-MODULE will undertake a student challenge involving the completion of two tasks. This section outlines these tasks, as well as the grading criteria for the assessment of these two tasks.

### **IVSC E-MODULE Student Challenge**

The IVSC E-MODULE involves students using Challenge-based learning in relation to one or more of the three thematic areas highlighted previously. For each thematic strand, students identify a specific related challenge that requires investigation and problem-solving, and it is on the basis of how they approach this challenge, and the learning and outcomes achieved, that the module is assessed. In this regard, students are required to work on the following two related tasks:

- Task A: The design, production and launching of a video of three minutes duration on social media, to raise awareness and engage peers in the wider community in relation to the challenge;
- Task B: One-page summary of the 5 areas listed below (250 words per section). Participation in a 10-minute Q/A discussion with the Evaluation Panel during which

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<sup>22</sup> Three strands, totalling 40 contact hours comprising five two-hour blocks across four thematic areas, would be delivered as a stand-alone module over the course of a semester.



they are required to describe, rationalise and critically evaluate their approach and the associated learning. Each student answers one question in the area not known in advance - addressing UDL, EDI, - multiple forms of representation and presented in different ways.

## Assessment Guidelines

As indicated, there are two parts (A and B) to the assessment for the E-MODULE which is graded according to the criteria provided. This allows for each institutional partner to apply the grade according to the assessment for the module into which it is embedded or as a stand-alone module grade. This allows for flexibility taking into account individual institutional requirements. Each part of the assessment is worth 50% of the total module grade with a pass mark of 25 points out of a total of 50 points. The overall pass mark for Part A and Part B is 50 points out of a total of 100 points. The grading criteria for each component are outlined below:

Part A: The video assignment is graded on a scale where 1 = poor, 2 = satisfactory, 3 = good, 4 = very good, and 5 = excellent, according to the assessment criteria outlined in Table 1:

Assessment Criteria	Grading Scale				
1) Evidence of critical understanding of theme	1	2	3	4	5
2) Positioning of their approach in relation to EDI and relevant SDG, with links explicitly made	1	2	3	4	5
3) Relevance of content for the target audience	1	2	3	4	5
4) Accessibility of language for target audience	1	2	3	4	5
5) Content is informative and engaging for target audience	1	2	3	4	5

6) Evidence of challenged-based approach (Clearly specified challenge and how it will be addressed)	1 2 3 4 5
7) Research (Evidence of relevant theoretical and community-based research)	1 2 3 4 5
8) Cross-cultural treatment of theme and evidence of intercultural learning	1 2 3 4 5
9) Digital skills (Quality of production and exploitation of tools used)	1 2 3 4 5
10) Overall quality of work submitted	1 2 3 4 5

Table 1: PART A Assessment Criteria and Grading Scale

Part B: the written output as well as the 10-minute Q/A discussion are assessed separately according to the criteria set out in Table 2. There are a total of 50 points, divided into 25 points for the written part of the assessment and 25 points for the oral component of the assessment.

- 1) Summarise the key learning from the module in relation to the theme.
- 2) Rationalise their approach to addressing the specific area of challenge.

- 3) Discuss any challenges that arose in the process and how they were addressed.
- 4) Discuss how their work has supported EDI and UN SDG4.
- 5) Evaluate the potential impact of their work.

Table 2: PART B Assessment Question Areas

Assessment for Part B will be completed by the Evaluation Panel and inclusive of both written output and a 10-minute Q/A discussion.

Assessment Criteria	Written Grading Scale: 1 point = poor 2 points = satisfactory 3 points = good 4 points = very good 5 points = excellent	Q/A Grading Scale: 1 point = poor 2 points = satisfactory 3 points = good 4 points = very good 5 points = excellent
Ability to identify and summarise the key learning of the team from the module in relation to the module and the theme.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

Depth of critical reasoning in relation to the approach selected to address the specific area of challenge.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Quality of discussion of any challenges that arose in the process and how they were addressed.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Ability to position and evaluate the relevance and contribution of their work to supporting EDI and UN SDG4.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Strength of critical analysis and evaluation of the potential impact of their work.	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

## 2.9 IVSC E-MODULE Digital Certificate Award

Where relevant and possible, students who take the module on an additional module basis can be awarded the 4 ECTS credits if their own institutional systems allow for this. Where it is embedded into an existing module (e.g., an alternative to an Erasmus module), it could possibly feature in the module outline explicitly, with the transversal learner competencies focused on listed, in alignment with key EU goals. On successful completion of the E-MODULE, students are awarded a digital certificate and badge by their own institution (see Appendix 6 for

exemplar of Digital Certificate). This records the credits gained for the E-MODULE and the thematic areas of study.

## **2.10 Summary**

This Section has provided a comprehensive account of the design process involved in the development of the ISVC E-MODULE and the rationale for the decisions taken. In Section Three which follows, we describe the methodological processes and procedures for the implementation of the IVSC E-MODULE.

## **SECTION THREE: IMPLEMENTING THE INTERCULTURAL VIRTUAL SOCIETAL CHALLENGE E-MODULE**

### **3.0 Overview**

In this Section, we set out the methods by which the IVSC E-MODULE can be implemented in ways that allow for in-built quality assurance, flexibility, capacity building and sustainability. The discussion begins by outlining the participatory framework associated with the methodology and establishing the nature of the tasks and responsibilities associated with each member of the IVSC-E-MODULE team across the partner institutions involved. From this, we provide step-by-step guidelines as to the types of pre-planning and training that are required by participating teaching staff, facilitators and students, and the mechanisms for quality assurance at each stage.

The IVSC utilises CBL (Challenge-based Learning) or learning through challenges (see Section 2.2). Similar to project-based learning, CBL allows learners to collaborate and take an active role in their projects. However, it innovates by introducing competition among teams of learners in resolving these challenges. CBL unfolds in four stages: engaging learners in the tasks to be accomplished, conducting research to formulate and share solutions, taking action to sustain the chosen solution, and evaluating the action taken. As a result, CBL establishes multiple learning objectives while structuring interactions between students.

### **3.1 Participatory Framework and Participant Roles**

The IVSC E-MODULE involves the participatory framework presented in Figure 6. For the purpose of clarity, and for the smooth implementation of the methodology, it is essential that each role is clearly defined in terms of the responsibilities and expectations involved.

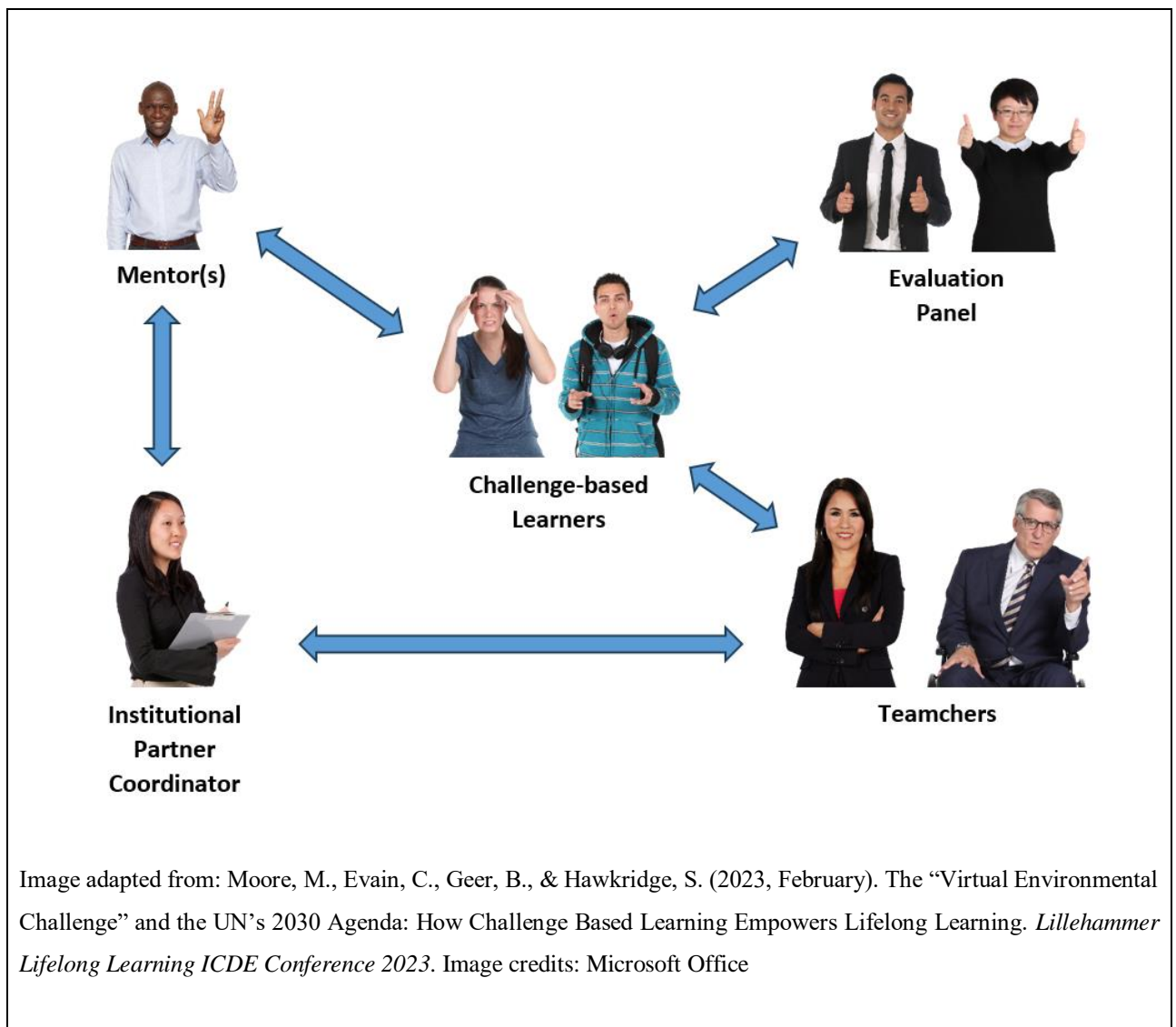


Image adapted from: Moore, M., Evain, C., Geer, B., & Hawkrigde, S. (2023, February). The “Virtual Environmental Challenge” and the UN’s 2030 Agenda: How Challenge Based Learning Empowers Lifelong Learning. *Lillehammer Lifelong Learning ICDE Conference 2023*. Image credits: Microsoft Office

Figure 6: IVSC E-MODULE Participatory Framework

There are five fundamental roles within the IVSC program: Institution Partner Coordinators, Mentors, Teamchers, Challenge-based learners, and the Evaluation Panel. Each role plays a unique and essential part in fostering a transformative learning experience. From guiding and supporting participants to facilitating engaging interactions and producing innovative solutions, these roles are instrumental in the success and impact of the IVSC initiative. Let's explore the responsibilities and contributions of each role in detail.

## **Institutional Partner Coordinator**

The Institutional Partner Coordinator (IPC) plays a long-term and vital role within each institution, overseeing the implementation of the ISVC E-MODULE in the university. The IPC is responsible for:

- 1) overall coordination of the E-MODULE in their home institution and is the contact person for all teaching staff and facilitators involved in the E-MODULE delivery;
- 2) promotion of the E-MODULE in their home university, and the recruitment of teaching staff and facilitators;
- 3) liaising with IPCs in partner institutions in order to facilitate the establishment of inter-institutional teams and the matching of suitable modules;
- 4) delivering initial training for teaching staff and facilitators in relation to the E-MODULE once interest has been established;
- 5) monitoring, assuring quality and record keeping;
- 6) participating in the Evaluation Panel (see below).

## **Mentor(s)**

We highly recommend having at least one Mentor per institution. For new Mentors joining our program, we suggest recruiting individuals with prior experience in Virtual Exchange. To familiarize themselves with the process, they can also review previous TRIP case studies. Specific training for Mentors will be provided, and IPCs will take responsibility for conducting this training using the IVSC training material. Mentors are people who have experience with a live edition of the IVSC and can take on a wide range of roles from support to communication.

Mentors:

- 1) act as an educational support to the IPC and can take on tasks such as educational design, and digital badge and certificate delivery;
- 2) act as a bridge between the IPC and inter-institutional Teamchairs;
- 3) play a role in quickly disseminating communications to Teamchairs (who in turn can deliver the message to Challenge-based learners, etc.);
- 4) guide Teamchairs as they navigate their IVSC facilitation role for the first time;
- 5) serve on the Evaluation Panel and provide feedback (where relevant and agreed).



## **Teamchers**

Teamchers fill the traditional student-facing role in the IVSC, and so she/he is a facilitator. This role is generally open to people who have started or completed postgraduate studies. Given the flexibility of the CBL-IVSC model, this role can also be filled by doctorates and, indeed, lecturers if necessary. Teamchers are expected to:

- 1) have received training on the IVSC methodology and resources;
- 2) liaise with Challenge-based learners;
- 3) aid Challenge-based learners in understanding the IVSC and resources;
- 4) facilitate the sharing of IVSC project ideas;
- 5) deliver didactic materials on the chosen topic;
- 6) suggest resources, digital tools, and multimedia;
- 7) support Challenge-based learners with project production;
- 8) guide Challenge-based learners towards the final production;
- 9) guide students during the IVSC presentation;
- 10) debrief learners following the challenge;
- 11) lead the Evaluation Panel and assess students (this may also involve other members of the Evaluation Panel depending on the regulations of the individual institutions involved and as agreed with all partner institutions at the start of the IVSC).

## **Challenge-based learners**

The Challenge-based learner teams are generally composed of students; however, it is possible to extend the criteria, i.e. to include people from any level of education or, indeed, life given the nature of the SDG 4's 'education for all' principle. Challenge-based learners are expected to:

- 1) understand the tasks related to the IVSC;
- 2) share ideas;
- 3) find a problem or a topic;
- 4) research;
- 5) formulate solutions;
- 6) share evaluations of the problem and solution;
- 7) implement the concept through IVSC digital productions;

- 8) attend and present to the Evaluation Panel.

## **Guidelines and Criteria for the Evaluation Panel**

The Evaluation Panel for the IVSC will play a crucial role in assessing the progress and outcomes of each iteration. It is important that assessment is impartial and in line with the individual institutional regulations. Here are the guidelines and criteria for forming and operating the Evaluation Panel:

- 1) Panel Size and Composition:

- a) The Evaluation Panel should consist of the Teamchcers from the inter-institutional partners involved. It may also involve other members, according to individual institutional regulations around grading. Other potential members could be a Mentor, an IPC, or the IVSC inclusion or quality assurance monitoring officer (where relevant).
- b) The IPCs will be responsible for recruiting members of the Evaluation Panel.

- 2) Number of Panels:

- a) For each iteration of the IVSC program, a separate Evaluation Panel will be formed.
- b) The ratio of the panel size to the maximum number of teams should be appropriate to maintain a fair and effective evaluation process.

- 3) Constitution of the Panel:

- a) The Evaluation Panel may include previous mentors who have experience in the CBL program to provide valuable insights.
- b) External experts from outside the participating institutions can be involved in the selection process to ensure objectivity, as stated in point 1.

- 4) Criteria for the Panel:

- a) Staff Evaluation Panel members should have a strong background in education, relevant subject matter expertise, or experience in project evaluation.

- b) They should demonstrate a commitment to fair assessment and a willingness to offer constructive feedback.
- 5) Role of the Panel:
- a) The Evaluation Panel will be responsible for assessing the teams' submissions, progress, and final outcomes based on predefined criteria.
  - b) They will offer valuable suggestions and feedback to the participating teams, guiding them towards improvement and innovation.
- 6) Roving Monitor:
- a) A designated "roving monitor" will be appointed, who will attend selected sessions throughout the program to observe and ensure the quality and fairness of the evaluation process. This "roving monitor" can be the quality monitor or someone in charge of quality assurance.
- 7) Panel Session:
- a) The Evaluation Panel will have viewed all IVSC videos before meeting up for the evaluation. The panel will then come into Session 5 of the IVSC program to collectively review the teams' performances and deliver their assessments.
  - b) A minimum of four panel members, including at least one student representative, the partner coordinator, and a Mentor, should be present during the session.

By following these criteria, we aim to establish a transparent, comprehensive, and supportive evaluation process that fosters growth and excellence within the IVSC program.

### **3.2 Teamwork and Group Size**

In CBL, great emphasis is placed on teamwork. Therefore, team size of groups is critical. The ideal team size can vary depending on several factors, including the complexity of the CBL project, the subject in which the challenge is integrated, and the available resources and facilitation.

However, there have been some studies and insights regarding team size in project-based and collaborative learning settings, which could be relevant to CBL. Here are some general findings:

1. **Small Teams (2-4 members):** Small teams can foster more intimate collaboration, stronger interpersonal relationships, and effective communication. They may be suitable for tasks that require close coordination and quick decision-making.
2. **Medium Teams (4-6 members):** Medium-sized teams can offer a balance between individual contributions and group dynamics. They provide more diversity of skills and perspectives, enhancing the potential for creativity and problem-solving.
3. **Large Teams (6+ members):** Large teams can tackle more extensive and multifaceted challenges, as they can pool a broader range of resources and expertise. However, they may face challenges in terms of coordination, communication, and ensuring equal participation.

While these insights are helpful, the optimal team size ultimately depends on the integration of the learning objectives into the course programme.

Our recommendation is to start with a small group to build up gradually over future iterations and to allow for flexibility to adapt to classroom sizes.

### **3.3 Recruitment, Promotion and Training Methods for Teamchairs**

After IPCs are designated within each institution, they work inter-institutionally to develop promotional materials to raise awareness of the E-MODULE amongst teaching staff and facilitators for recruitment purposes. In the TRIP project piloting, this took the form of a 3-minute video that IPCs circulated to teaching staff in conjunction with a sign-up form where expressions of interest could be recorded (see TRIP website and link to the tool kit).

IPCs in each institution train their own potential Teamchairs through the following procedures:

- 1) Create and make available a short video (see example of TRIP training video in Appendix 8). This can be sent to potential Teamchairs in advance for them to view in their own time.

- 2) Arrange a synchronous Q&A (recommended 30 minutes)
- 3) Create a sign-up form for participation. Information must include name of Teamcher, discipline, module where training will be embedded (or stand-alone), timetabling of the content delivery, which of the four themes will be covered, language(s) involved in the virtual exchange, and the number and level of anticipated students. This information can be shared with IPCs and Teamchers involved in the IVSC.

Partner coordinators organize a meeting for mapping and matching. Where possible, they are guided by the following criteria (see Appendix 7 for [Example of mapping document](#)):

- 1) Compatible timeframes (start date/end date, number of days/weeks);
- 2) Compatible students (including number of students/teams);
- 3) Mutually agreed delivery platform (e.g, Microsoft Teams);
- 4) Mutually agreed language of delivery of the virtual exchange (please note - students should be flexibility around language use while students are engaged in collaborative tasks to create opportunities for foreign language learning where this is relevant and possible);
- 5) Compatible discipline/embedded module and (if so, which module) or stand-alone;
- 6) Initial training is done jointly in session 1 (decide who will organise it);
- 7) Decide members of Evaluation Panel.

The established site for information sharing and record keeping (open access) is the TRIP website - <https://www.trip-project.eu/>.

During each iteration of the IVSC, a YouTube channel will be established, utilizing the IVSC YouTube channel templates. To manage the channel effectively, a student representative from each partner institution will be responsible for uploading videos. Additionally, teachers will upload their own materials while ensuring that all relevant links are centralized on a collaborative spreadsheet. The primary goal is to enhance digital upskilling through the students' involvement in curating and uploading materials. Detailed guidance on designing, producing, and posting this content will be covered in the training provided by the Teamchers.

### **3.4 Guidelines and Tools for Initial Training**

In this section, training for all participants in the IVSC is detailed through guidelines, tools and procedures to ensure that all participants receive adequate training to facilitate successful completion of the E-MODULE as well as ongoing sustainability of the programme.

#### **Training Methodology Instruction**

IVSC participants require training. This can take the form of an inter-institutional training session, and that can be supplemented where needed by one or more institutional training session. In the TRIP project, we offered combined training for Teamchers and Mentors that was agreed and organised by the IPCs together, and training for Challenge-based learning that was organised by their own institutional Teamcher. Where possible, training for Challenge-based learners can involve peers from other institutions as a way of introducing them to each other and fostering collaboration.

#### **Training for Teamchers/Mentors**

Training Format: The training can take the form of a short video produced by the IPCs that is sent to the Teamchers/Mentors highlighting the key information (see Appendix 8 for examples [of TRIP training videos](#)). This can be followed by a synchronous Question and Answer (Q&A) session (e.g., on Microsoft Teams).

Q&A Session: The Q&A session can run for between thirty minutes and an hour depending on the needs of those involved and provide participants with an opportunity to seek clarifications, discuss concerns, and share insights related to the training material. This is an opportunity also for Teamchers/Mentors from the different institutions to meet each other and share contact details. At this stage, Teamchers and Mentors should be shown where they can find the relevant IVSC materials and resources relating to all areas of the content and assessment. Where needed, further training can be offered and Teamchers/Mentors should be encouraged to liaise with each other throughout the IVSC.

Feedback from Teamcher/Mentor Training: Feedback in relation to the training will be gathered as part of the overall IVSC feedback survey (see Appendix 9 for an example of the [TRIP IVSC Teamcher/Mentor Feedback Form](#)).

## **Training for Challenge-based Learners**

Student/Learner Training: Training is provided by the Teamchers/Mentors for the Challenge-based learners. This should take place in the first session, or it can also be offered as an initial pre-session should this be preferred. This training involves an overview of the IVSC so that the learners have a good sense of their role and the type of engagement and outcomes expected. The initial training session is also an opportunity for inter-institutional team-building, where possible, amongst the learner participants (see Appendix 10 for examples of [TRIP team-building exercises](#)). At this stage, Challenge-based learners should be shown where they can find the relevant IVSC materials and resources relating to all areas of the content and assessment. Further targeted training is provided for the learners where needed as the IVSC progresses (e.g., around digital and cultural upskilling and desk research/information sourcing – see Appendix 11 [for IVSC TRIP Learner Training Guidelines and Materials](#)).

Feedback from Challenge-based Learner Training: Feedback in relation to the training will be gathered as part of the overall IVSC feedback survey (see Appendix 12 for an example of the [TRIP IVSC Challenge-based Feedback Form](#)).

### **3.5 Guidelines and Tools for Inter-Institutional Mapping and Matching**

Institutional partner coordinators organise the mapping and matching together in an online meeting. At this stage, important decisions need to be made in relation to the following areas and the information needs to be recorded on a master inter-institutional mapping document (see Appendix 7 for example [TRIP IVSC Inter-Institutional Mapping Document](#)):

- 1) The institutions involved in the IVSC iteration being planned. In the TRIP project, it was agreed to aim for between 2 and 5 partners, and where possible to include an associate partner institution from a Global South context in support of SDG 17;
- 2) The timeline, start and end date, and delivery option (e.g., embedded or stand-alone) and schedule;
- 3) The learner groups involved, the language to be used and the number of students in each group;
- 4) The name of the Teamcher(s)/Mentor(s) for each group;

- 5) The Evaluation Panel membership for each IVSC E-MODULE and grading and assessment requirements (e.g., credits or digital certificate);
- 6) The date of the inter-institutional Teamcher/Mentor training delivered by the IPCs (e.g., training video and Q&A session).

### **3.6 Piloting the IVSC E-MODULE**

We recommend piloting the IVSC E-MODULE before implementation in order to assure that the model meets your own specific requirements.

### **3.7 Feedback and Review**

For quality assurance monitoring, it is essential that opportunities are created for feedback and review at both the piloting stages and following any implementation of the IVSC E-MODULE. Feedback can be gathered by means of e.g., an online survey from the participants involved. It is our suggestion that a separate feedback mechanism is created for Teamchers/Mentors and for Challenge-based learners as the areas of relevance for feedback may differ (see Appendix 12 for the [TRIP IVSC Feedback Form](#)).

### **3.8 Summary of Section Three**

This Section has provided a detailed account of how the IVSC can be operationalised and where there is the potential for flexibility and adaptation, and it has also highlighted the approach adopted by the TRIP project partners and the underlying rationale.. In Section 4 of this training guide, we review and reflect on the data from the feedback surveys and case studies completed by the key stakeholders highlight the learning gained and the challenges encountered along the way, as well as the attempts made to resolve these in terms of the evolving design of the IVSC over the course of the TRIP project duration.



## SECTION FOUR: REFLECTING ON THE EVOLUTION OF THE TRIP IVSC PROJECT: LEARNING OUTCOMES, CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

### 4.0 Overview of Section

In this Section, we reflect on how the IVSC has evolved over three piloting phases from the academic year 2022-23 to the second semester of 2023-24 drawing on the quantitative and qualitative data gathered at each phase from surveys involving the key stakeholders. We have also integrated qualitative extracts from the reflective case studies which were provided by the participants in the project at each phase of the piloting. We begin by providing a brief overview of each of the three phases of piloting.

### 4.1 Overview of the Piloting Phases

As can be seen in Table 1, three phases of piloting took place between the academic years 2022 and 2024.

Pilot n°	Dates	Languages involved	N° of total participants	N° of participants in the survey
Pilot 1 VEC	Second semester 2022-23	English French	75	45
Pilot 2 IVSC	First semester 2023-24	English German	143	32
Pilot 3 IVSC	Second semester 2023-24	English French German	220	53

Table 1: Overview of 3 phases of piloting

As indicated, the initial model which was piloted in Phase 1 was named the *Virtual Societal Challenge* (VSC) in English and the *Défi Sociétal Virtuel* (DSC) in French. It was created

originally by the University of Rennes 2, as part of their own educational offering, and it was the version which subsequently evolved to become the IVSC following an initial piloting phase.

A survey was designed to gather feedback in relation to this initial model (see [Appendix 13: Pilot 1 Survey](#)). It featured a total of 47 questions and was completed by 45 participants of the total number of 75 who participated in the VSC, representing 60 %. An overview of the participants from the three universities who took completed the survey relating to the VEC, the themes explored, and the languages used is provided in Table 2.

Role		Language		University		Theme	
Learner	11	English	15	UR2	37	Environment	45
Teamcher	32	French	26	UCM	5		
Mentor	0	French sign language	6	UMB	3		
Coordinator	2						

Table 2: Pilot 1 Overview of Key Survey Information

In the second and third phase of piloting of the new iteration, that is the IVSC, a more targeted survey was used to gather feedback from the participants. ([Appendix 12](#)). It consisted of a total of 21 questions based around eight themes: information about the participants, training provided, language accessibility, relevance of content, timetable and scheduling, delivery format, inter-institutional collaboration, benefits and challenges.

Pilot 2 survey was completed by 32 of the total number of 156 participants, representing 22 %. The details of the participating universities, languages used in the various iterations and the stakeholders involved are set out in Table 3.

Role	Language	University
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Learner	22	English	29	UR2	8
Teamcher	4	German	5	UCM	7
Mentor	2			UMB	1
Coordinator	4			UL	10
				EUF	5
				University of Tlemcen	1

Table 3: Pilot 2 Overview of Key Survey Information

The Pilot 3 survey was completed by 53 participants out of a total of 220, that is 24% of those who participated in the third iteration. Table 4 provides an overview of the key information gathered in the survey for this iteration of the IVSC.

Role		Language		University	
Learner	32	English	30	UR2	10
Teamcher	16	German	6	UCM	18
Mentor	4	French	17	UMB	9
Coordinator	1			UL	7
				EUF	5
				None	4

Table 4: Piloting 3: Overview of Key Survey Information

In addition to the feedback surveys which were administered for each phase of the piloting, participants in the various stakeholder roles, that is, Coordinators, Teamchers and Learners,

were also encouraged to provide a reflective account of their experience, for which a template with cues was designed to guide them. It included the following areas: challenge-based learning context, virtual format, thematic content, intercultural skills development, digital skills development, and final thoughts. These reflective accounts, which number 20 in total, serve as case studies and will be referred to in the following discussion, which focuses on the main learning outcomes and challenges for the participating stakeholders as evidenced in the surveys and case studies relating to each phase of piloting (See Appendix 13 for a sample of the surveys and Appendix 14 for a sample of case studies).

## **4.2 Key Findings relating to Learning Outcomes**

### 4.2.1. Challenge Based Learning

#### ***Piloting 1 Findings:***

In relation to the Challenge-based learning approach that featured in the VEC/IVSC, both the IVSC learners and teamchers reported favourably overall on their engagement with this approach with 24 out of a total number of 45 who completed the survey reporting that they found it *beneficial* by comparison with 7 who felt the opposite and a further 14 who either held a neutral view or failed to comment.

As far as the perceived benefits of challenge-based learning were concerned, in the surveys, many of the learners commented on how much they valued the practical, motivational, and immersive nature of the approach. The application of theoretical knowledge through real or simulated projects was highlighted in particular as an advantage as it was considered to help develop real life skills alongside linguistic competencies. Further perceived benefits were the opportunity to work on a wide range of tasks with tangible outcomes such as the creation of logos, slogans, surveys, presentations, and videos. As the following comment illustrates:

Teamcher: *“These methodologies help the students become more active in the learning process. Instead of just passively listening to lectures, they are encouraged to explore, research and create solutions to real-world problems. They develop critical thinking, creativity, communication and group work.”*

In the case studies from all three piloting phases, learners also reflected positively on the innovative nature of the methodologies, even if they sometimes felt challenged, as will be

discussed further in Section 4.3. In the following section, we highlight the findings relating to the virtual format drawing on the surveys and case studies from the three piloting phases.

#### 4.2.2 Virtual Format

##### *Piloting 1 Findings*

The findings relating to the virtual delivery format revealed that the participants were divided in their views with 7 reporting positively, 9 expressing negative sentiments, and a further 5 recognising both the pros and cons of this delivery format. The perceived benefits were the opportunities this format offered for engagement with learners from all over the world and for foreign language skills development while the negative sentiments mostly focused on the issues of digital pollution and the additional motivation and strategies needed for online learning. The overall findings in this area for Piloting 2 are presented in Table 5.

##### *Piloting 2 Findings*

The findings from the surveys for delivery format in Piloting Phase 2 are presented in Table 5.

<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Very good</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Fairly good</b>	<b>Poor</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>

Table 5: Findings for delivery format from Survey in Piloting Phase 2

As indicated, 27 of the total number of 31 participants felt that the delivery format was positive, but to varying degrees, with the remaining 4 reporting unfavourable views.

When asked to offer suggestions to improve the virtual delivery format, a range of views were expressed, as the following comments exemplify:

Teacher: *“this module is not exactly an "E-Module". This really confused learners. In person teaching of the material was fine but then the online/digital aspect became redundant. I don't see the point of IVSC if the only real communication happens in person and between members of the same institution.”*

This comment relates to the fact that in some iterations where the IVSC was embedded in an existing module, rather than being an independent elective, some partners chose to offer some of the content in person in a traditional classroom setting rather than online. Further key issues mentioned by some were that *technical problems* and *scheduling clashes* which made it difficult for some learners to participate at times.

The findings in this area for Piloting Phase 3 are presented in Table 6 and discussed subsequently.

***Piloting 3 Findings***

<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Very Good</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Fairly Good</b>	<b>Poor</b>
<b>14</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>

Table 6: Findings for delivery format from Survey in Piloting Phase 3

As indicated in Table 6, the vast majority of the participants reported favourable views in relation to the online delivery format, to varying degrees, despite the fact that technical issues were also noted, as the following comments exemplify: *“the online delivery seems the best way. There are always issues but usually they are easily resolved”*. *In the surveys for this phase of piloting, no negative views about the online delivery format were reported.*

**4.2.3 Overview of Learning Outcomes**

The following comments from the case studies across the three phases of piloting underscore the wide-ranging benefits that accrued for the participants across a range of areas including: to learning about and addressing real world problems, gaining practical knowledge, and developing autonomy, resilience building skills and creativity:

*Participating in this project has been one of the most unique experiences during our whole degree. One year after, my team companions and I still talk about it. We’ve put in practice the skills we learned. It was a very complete experience that combined things we*

*were familiar with, like language learning and environmentalism, with new and exciting things, such as edition and international mentoring. (Case study nº2, Learner, Piloting 1)*

*I have always thought that learning based on challenges can show the best of ourselves, because you decide yourself how much to get involved, how much to investigate, of course the challenge has its basic criteria defined, but it is a personal and group decision to what extent to take it. One of the positive aspects I learned during the challenge is that no matter how much of my day to day I dedicate to my personal and professional activities, there is always room to develop an idea that improves our immediate environment, in managing time well is the challenge. (Case study nº5, Learner, Piloting 2)*

*Challenge-based learning is a very good teaching technique. Not only do you face situations you have never been in before, but you also develop coping skills. It can be hard, but it is very effective and what you learn this way is hardly forgotten. (Case study nº9, Learner Piloting 3).*

#### **4.2.4 Intercultural Skills Development**

One of the key learning outcomes mentioned by the participants in the surveys and the case studies was the development of intercultural skills with many observing how much they valued learning about other cultures, which in turn, raised their awareness about differences and made them question their own cultural biases.

##### ***Piloting 1 Findings***

In Piloting phase 1, many participants reported gaining significant knowledge about other cultural perspectives, particularly through interactions with peers from different cultural backgrounds. The areas where they felt they had gained cultural insights included ecology, how to work in intercultural teams, and how to communicate with people from other cultures. Their comments noted that engaging with diverse cultural backgrounds had not only broadened their cultural awareness but had also enhanced their ability to communicate effectively and collaborate across borders. Moreover, several participants mentioned adapting to different working styles, team dynamics, and cultural norms, which contributed to their overall cultural competence. In sum, it can be inferred that this was an experiential intercultural learning

experience as it provided a platform for the exchange of cultural perspectives and to deepen understanding of global issues.

### ***Piloting 2 Findings***

Similar findings were reported in Piloting Phase 2, as the following comments exemplify:

Learner: *“It has been a great opportunity to practise a foreign language, of course, but also to learn more about different cultures. In my case, I had no experience in queer or gender studies, and I am very grateful to have been able to learn about the topic.”*

Teamcher: *“I learned a lot from the students' realities in their countries”*

Teamcher: *“I definitely felt like I could explore and discuss the different subjects to a great extent again, which was super interesting. Also the international connections and communication was also an integral and important part for me.”*

Coordinator: *“My students loved the opportunity of working with students from other countries. They loved the choice of 3 themes as well.”*

### ***Piloting 3 Findings***

In Pilot 3 positive intercultural leaning experiences were also reported by the various stakeholders as the following comments illustrate:

Learner: *I learned a lot of new things, changed the way I think, had contact with other students and teachers, and it improved my communication and collaboration skills.*

- Learner: *Participation in IVSC activities has expanded my knowledge and understanding of international valuation standards and practices, enhancing my professional development in the field(teamwork/language skills...)*
- Teamcher: *I benefited from engaging in the IVSC in the intercultural experience above all, whether with learners as with other teamchers or mentors.*
- 

Interestingly, in the case studies, one of the case studies a teamcher, remarked on the importance of including cultures from outside of the EU in the IVSC. *“it need[s] to have a global rather than a western perspective.”* (Case study n°4, Teamcher Pilot 2). A coordinator also emphasized the *enlightening discussions* that took place between learners from cultures with



different social values and norms. (Case study n°6, IVSC coordinator Pilot 2). These comments supported the decisions taken to include wider representation in the IVSC by universities in global south countries including Algeria and Indonesia in the third piloting phase.

In sum, in overall terms, almost all case studies confirmed that a range of intercultural communication skills were developed during the project, as in the following example:

*Having each Teamcher from a different university was very beneficial. We complemented each other well in advising the work groups and learned a lot from each other. Although student participation varied weekly, having four countries involved (Spain, Ireland, France, and Slovakia) was very beneficial for developing intercultural skills. The proposed research topics for the final projects were innovative and of great interest to the entire class. (Case study n°12, Teamcher Pilot 3)*

#### **4.2.5 Foreign Language Skills Development**

Another key learning output of the project was the development of foreign language skills as the IVSC was seen to create opportunities for the participants to communicate in a different language to their native tongue, which many found highly beneficial. This can be explained by the fact most of the participants came from Language Studies degree programmes. Accordingly, foreign language learning was a key element for both students and teachers. This is clearly observed in the first Piloting phase where the Teamchers were all Masters level students of Language Didactics, and the learners all came from foreign language classes.

##### ***Piloting 1 Findings***

Many participants in Pilot 1 noted significant improvements in their foreign language proficiency and communication abilities as a result of participating in the VEC. This improvement was attributed to the necessity of communicating in a foreign language with fellow learners, which provided practical language practice and increased their confidence using the language, as this comment from a case study exemplifies:

*It was a formative experience for us, as we had very few interactions with native French speakers previously. Our cultural development was mainly focused on improving language skills, mostly related to communication and vocabulary, and*

*getting in touch with French environmentalist culture. (Case study n°2, Learner Pilot 1)*

In overall terms, 73.68% of respondents in the surveys in Piloting Phase 1 reported improvements in their language proficiency.

### ***Pilot 2 and 3 Findings***

Interestingly, in Piloting Phases 2 and 3 which involved a more diverse group of learners, there was less mention of foreign language skills development with only 3 out of 20 respondents in Piloting Phase 2, and 8 out of 27 respondents in Piloting Phase 3 explicitly mentioning the development of Foreign Language skills in the survey although, communication skills in a foreign language were sometimes considered as part of intercultural communication skills, as can be seen in the following comment from a learner in a case study. :

*The intercultural skills I developed were mainly communication skills, even more so in a language that is not my native language. The experience was enriching because it pushed me to apply my knowledge to a concrete project. At all times, I felt motivated by the teamchers, and the result we shared with the participants of other modules was gratifying. (Case study n°5, Learner Pilot 2)*

While the issue of language barriers was also raised, it was noted that this could also result in increased cultural awareness, as the following comment by a learner in a case study in Piloting Phase 3 reveals:

*The TRIP project allowed the group members and me to realise that our language barrier, which mainly consisted of limited English vocabulary and our accent-heavy speech, made it challenging for people from different backgrounds to understand us. First of all, language barrier was the most fundamental hurdle,*

*given that none of the group members spoke English as their first language. This created communication issues and required more time to convey messages in group chats or pronounce difficult words. This language barrier made us realise that we are indeed different from each other, and we learned that patience and understanding were the key to talking to people from different backgrounds. It led us to develop a deep respect for each other and an appreciation for different cultures. We dedicated sometime during online group meetings to learn about each other's cultures, including religious beliefs and practices. These challenges highlighted the importance of cross-cultural understanding and digital skills in today's globalised world. (Case study n°18, Learner Pilot 3)*

#### **4.2.6 Topic Related Knowledge**

A further key learning outcome was the new knowledge about the topics that gained by the stakeholders in all Piloting phase.

##### ***Piloting 1 Findings***

An increase in knowledge about environment issues was highlighted in the survey responses in Piloting Phase 1 as this was the main topic explored, with participation in the VEC seen to have a significant impact on the participants' interest in and concern for the environment..

Out of the 38 respondents, 15 indicated a strong increase in interest (rated 5), while 10 noted a moderate effect (rated 4). Only 8 respondents reported minimal or no change (rated 1 and 2 combined). Indeed, many felt more motivated to take meaningful actions, such as reducing waste and conserving resources, highlighting that participating in the project exposed them to new environmental challenges and solutions, leading to a deeper personal engagement with eco-friendly practices. Additionally, the project has facilitated learning about ecology in areas such as digital pollution, biodiversity, sustainable agriculture and the importance of bees in ecosystems as evidenced in the survey responses.

In addition, it should be mentioned that the piloting of the VEC was conducted with students with hearing impairments who were fluent in French Sign Language (FSL). This initiative aimed to broaden accessibility and inclusion within environmental education and activism,. It was divided into three phases: collaboration with an FSL teacher to develop communication

strategies and materials, intensive preparation and engagement through workshops and training sessions, and international collaboration to expand networks and share best practices.

Interestingly, while in Piloting Phases 2 and 3, some of the participants also highlighted the importance of the thematic content for them, as the following comments illustrate, the number involved was far fewer:

### ***Piloting 2 Findings***

*Learner: It has been a great opportunity to practise a foreign language, of course, but also to learn more about different cultures. In my case, I had no experience in queer or gender studies, and I am very grateful to have been able to learn about the topic.*

*Teamcher: I suppose I did learn more about the theme that I was involved in and now have more awareness of how I can help reduce discrimination and speak out.*

### ***Piloting 3 Findings***

*Learner: I think it was a very helpful tool to get to know more things about the environment and diversity.*

*Teamcher: It was a great experience not only to engage with students from other universities but also the other teamchers. I also improved my digital skills during this project and got a greater in depth knowledge of the topic.*

As one of the learners pointed out in her case study, the main objective of the project was not only to learn about the topics but also to develop awareness about problems and challenges that learners have to address:

*In environment the objective of the content was to develop a sense of responsibility and commitment to protect the environment and adopt sustainable practices. In race the content was aimed at finding creative solutions to the problem of racism and the system of privilege. (Case study n°5, Learner Pilot 2)*

From this overview of the learning outcomes relating to topic related knowledge, we turn next to the learning gained in relation to digital technology.

#### **4.2.7 Digital Skills**

Interestingly, the participants gave less importance to the development of the digital skills in the overall project, possibly due to the increasing digital competences among university students.

##### ***Piloting 1 Findings***

In Pilot 1 where there was a specific question about the development of digital skills, many respondents highlighted learning outcomes related to graphic design, video editing, and accessing digital information. In overall terms, 31 participants out of 45 reported that they had developed digital skills as opposed to only 7 who claimed the opposite. Their comments mainly highlighted their increased familiarisation with digital tools (Canva, h5p, Genially, Wordwall) and new competencies they had developed such as with video presentation.

In Piloting Phases 2 and 3, the comments in this regard were fewer but some also reported increased digital skills, as is illustrated below:

##### ***Piloting 2 Findings***

Coordinator: *To see international student groups working together and producing a video was very enjoyable!*

- Learner: *It was very rewarding to build a project from the ground up (theoretically). It was nice to see that we are capable of it. The opportunity to work with people from different parts of the world is extremely exciting. I've been able to experience a sense of agency in my education. Teaching ourselves how to use video making softwares has been very rewarding. I had the opportunity to use different collaborative platforms as well such as Google meet, WhatsApp and Google Docs).*

##### ***Piloting 3 Findings***

In this phase, participants also mentioned they have enhanced their digital skills as the following comments exemplify:

Teacher: *I learned new things and formed skills in online teaching*

Learner: *Gained valuable skills in terms of international cooperation, use of my target language and video production.*

The case studies revealed a recognition of the need for increased digital literacy and how the project could help to strengthen this, as the following comment illustrates:.

*Through the TRIP project, we also realised that we lacked digital skills. The solution was to follow the tutorials delivered by the teamchers and develop it according to our capacity. For example, we learned about the PechaKucha video maker application and then tried to find a similar application that was more familiar to me. Eventually, I was able to create a simple video and did a voice-over. Through perseverance and hard work, I eventually made it. (Case study n°18, Learner Pilot 3)*

In conclusion, the surveys and case studies have revealed very positive overall responses from the participants in relation to the learning gained from the VEC/IVSC across a wide range of areas. From this review, we turn next to the challenges that arose along the way and how these were addressed.

### **4.3 Challenges**

.A number of challenges were reported by participants in the surveys and case studies during Piloting Phase 1 as are listed below, which will be explored over the course of this section.

- **Lack of Motivation/Engagement**

There was a reported lack of motivation and engagement on the part of both Teamchers and Learners and this was felt to have contributed to the failure of some in each group to complete the project. In some cases, this was also found to be due to feeling overburdened with the workload.

- **Insufficient/Poor guidance by Teamchers**

Some learners also felt that guidance and communication by teamchers was insufficient, as in the following comment illustrates:

Learner: *There was a lack of communication between my group and the teamchers.*

- **Insufficient training of Teamchers**

The view was also often expressed by teamchers and learners alike that teamchers lacked training in how to deliver the thematic content in ways that were learner-centred and accessible, especially those with lower language proficiency levels, as the following comment exemplifies:

Teamcher: *It was difficult knowing how to convey complex issues in a simple language*

Learners also often reported being confused by poor instructions and explanations, as in the following comment which also indicated how this problem was particularly acute for those with a lower language proficiency level:

Learner: *I found it very hard to follow the instructions especially as they were in a foreign language for me*

- **Limited themes and materials**

Further challenges reported in the Piloting 1 surveys related to the materials used for the various themes and topics with a strong desire expressed for greater choice as in the following comment:

Teamcher: *I would have preferred more materials and for them to be better organised*

- **Insufficient learner intercultural training**

There was also a desire expressed for increased intercultural training, and for this to extend to cultures that the learners were less familiar with, such as in global south countries, as is exemplified in the following comment:

Learner: *We needed more intercultural training as this was new to me and I felt we needed to learn more about other cultures in developing countries.*

- **Insufficient digital training**

A desire for additional digital training, and how to teach digital skills was also expressed but mostly by Teamchers, as below:

Teamcher: *I felt I lacked the ability to teach digital skills and that the learners were often better than me.*

- **Unequal workload and a lack of clarity over assessment**

Challenges relating to workload and assessment were also reported in Piloting Phase 1, particularly by the learners who participated, as the following comments illustrate:

Learner: *It was a lot of work and I didn't realise this at the start.*

Learner: *I ended up doing much more work than some of the others in my group who didn't take their responsibilities seriously so it was unfair as it was group assessment..*

Learner: *It was confusing what the guidelines were for the assessment and the teamcher didn't make it clear.*

This suggested the need for improvements in a number of key related areas.

- **Conflicting Scheduling**

Several challenges were reported around scheduling. For instance, the partner institutions often had different semester dates and there was also the issue of participants operating in different time zones. This led to frustration and made inter-institutional collaboration difficult, as the following comments exemplify:

Teamcher; *It was very difficult trying to find slots that suited everyone because we had different timetables*



Learner: *It was frustrating when we scheduled a slot and then the others didn't turn up because they had to attend something in their own university.*

- **Poor Inter-institutional Coordination and Collaboration**

Poor inter-institutional coordination and collaboration between some coordinators, teamchers, mentors and learners was also a key challenge reported in the early days of the project as the following comments illustrate:

Teamchers: *We needed to coordinate better between the teamchers to make sure we were all doing the same thing so as not to confuse the learners.*

Learners: *We wanted to work with the students in the other universities but it was so difficult to organise times to meet and sometimes it was just the students from one university working together.*

Coordinators: *More thought needed to go into the inter-partner collaboration process at all levels.*

Given that inter-institutional collaboration was a key feature of the IVSC, this was a key challenge that needed to be addressed as it posed a major threat to the success of the project.

- **Unfamiliar Digital Platform**

The choice of Zoom as the initial digital platform used for the VEC project, and the decision to change to Teams for the IVSC also raised issues for some of the participants, as the following comment indicates:

Teamcher: *I was not familiar with Teams as in my university we only use Zoom so it took a while to get familiar with it.*

From this review of the challenges that emerged in the early days of the project, we turn to the solutions that were introduced to address these in the following iterations.

#### 4.4. Solutions

Based on this feedback several important changes were introduced in relation to the design of the IVSC and the training provided for teamchers and learners in Phases 2 and 3, as are listed below:

- Different versions of the IVSC were created including a stand-alone version to give all concerned greater choice and flexibility.
- Additional themes were added relating to the topics of gender, race and inclusion to offer greater choice to students in terms of the area they could chose to focus on for their virtual challenge project and to increase motivation and interest.
- To further support both Teamchers and Learners, additional thematic content and supplementary materials were developed and made available on a single platform.
- A greater focus was also brought on the intercultural training component of the IVSC and the digital training of teamchers and learners with a wide range of resources introduced and made accessible to all involved.
- Before implementing the IVSC, an initial online training session was also developed and offered to all stakeholders followed by a synchronous, interactive Q and A.
- To reduce the stress associated with the competition format in the original VEC, which some students had objected to in the surveys, this element was replaced by a presentation followed by a Q&A session with a Panel of experts, with a view to offering more varied and interactive assessment modes.
- The assessment for the IVC was made clearer in the initial training and information sessions and more user friendly guidelines were provided. Teamchers were also encouraged to make learners aware of the various assessment elements and to check that all students in the various groups were contributing equally.
- To facilitate scheduling, different versions of the IVSC (5 week/ 8 week and a stand-alone version) were offered so that institutions could be better matched to partners with similar academic calendars.
- Teamchers in the partner institutions were also requested to hold more regular meetings with each other throughout the course of the IVSC to be able to address any communication and scheduling issues that were arising.
- To improve inter-institutional coordination, it was decided to hold more regular meetings between the Coordinators involved in each iteration.

- Initial training was provided in relation to Teams to support those who were unfamiliar with this platform.

The changes that were introduced over the course of Piloting Phase 2 and 3 of the IVSC to address the initial challenges experienced by the participants in the early days of the VEC have resulted in a more comprehensive, motivating and flexible IVSC model for which all participants are better prepared. Indeed, the initial IVSC training sessions introduced in Pilot 2 met with the approval of 80% of Teamchairs who considered that the quality of training was at least *Good*. 60% of learners also reported favourably, as Table 6 and 7 illustrate.

***Teamchairs:***

<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Very Good</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Fairly good</b>	<b>Poor</b>
<b>8.3%</b>	<b>33.3%</b>	<b>41.7%</b>	<b>8.3%</b>	<b>8.3%</b>

Table 7: Overall approval rates for IVSC Training amongst Teachers

***Learners:***

<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Very Good</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Fairly good</b>	<b>Poor</b>
<b>13.8%</b>	<b>20.7%</b>	<b>24.1%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>10.3%</b>

Table 8: Overall approval rates for IVSC training amongst learners

Changes implemented in Piloting Phase 2 in the areas of teaching materials, intercultural materials and digital materials were also received positively overall, as Tables 8, 9 and 10 illustrate:

***Teaching Materials***

<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Very Good</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Fairly good</b>	<b>Poor</b>
<b>12.9%</b>	<b>35.5%</b>	<b>32.3%</b>	<b>16.1%</b>	<b>3.2%</b>

Table 9: Overall approval rates for IVSC teaching materials

*Intercultural materials*

<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Very Good</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Fairly good</b>	<b>Poor</b>
<b>9.7%</b>	<b>22.6%</b>	<b>48.4%</b>	<b>9.7%</b>	<b>9.7%</b>

Table 10: Overall approval rates for IVSC intercultural materials

*Digital materials*

<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Very Good</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Fairly good</b>	<b>Poor</b>
<b>9.7%</b>	<b>22.6%</b>	<b>48.4%</b>	<b>9.7%</b>	<b>9.7%</b>

Table 11: Overall approval rates for IVSC digital materials

Coordination between the various stakeholders also improved over the course of Piloting 2 and 3 as is indicated in Tables 11, 12 and 13 in relation to the rates of approval recorded in the surveys for Piloting Phase 3:

*Coordination between inter-institutional teamchairs/mentors*

<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Very Good</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Fairly good</b>	<b>Poor</b>
<b>18.5%</b>	<b>29.6%</b>	<b>25.9%</b>	<b>18.5%</b>	<b>7.4%</b>

Table 12: Overall approval rates for IVSC coordination between institutional teamchairs/mentors

*Coordination between teamchairs/learners*

<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Very Good</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Fairly good</b>	<b>Poor</b>
<b>31%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>20.7%</b>	<b>13.8%</b>	<b>3.4%</b>

Table 13: Overall approval rates for IVSC coordination between teamchairs/learners

### *Coordination between inter-institutional learners*

<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Very Good</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Fairly good</b>	<b>Poor</b>
<b>25.8%</b>	<b>16.1%</b>	<b>19.4%</b>	<b>16.1%</b>	<b>22.6%</b>

Table 14: Overall approval rates for IVSC coordination between teamchers/learners

## **4.5 Summary**

By way of summary of this Section, we present two evaluative comments made by the participants in relation to their overall experience of engagement in the IVSC which are representative of those received:

In summary, participating in IVSC requires a time commitment, but I believe that the personal result is satisfactory because of the knowledge you take away from the contents taught, the development of intercultural skills, especially communication skills in my case, feeling more confident using digital tools and for being a challenge for yourself. (Case study n°5, Learner Pilot 2).

For teamchers involved, this IVSC pilot has been the most attractive and engaging. The reason is that teamchers from 3 countries were allowed to work in a close synergy. Each teamcher was responsible for 1 or 2 weekly sessions. Following the joint structure, common to all the sessions, they had to prepare contents and accompany students in particular tasks. Our university's teamchers worked in tandem. First of the two sessions they were in charge of facilitating students' initial brainstorming to spot „big ideas“ for projects. The other session ensured by our teamchers was dedicated to videomaking. Enhancing students' ICT skills was an added value throughout the whole activity.(Case study n°20, Teamcher Pilot 3)

As these comments reveal, those involved were able to critically evaluate their experiences in relation to both the positive learning outcomes and the areas of challenge which arose, and they

were also able to offer well-informed suggestions where improvements were needed, all of which points to the development of critically thinking skills as a key goal of the IVSC project.

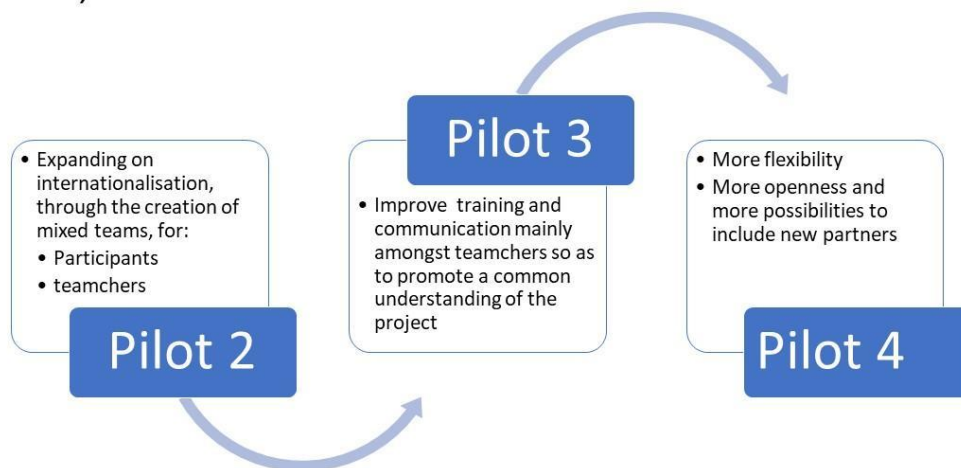
From this reflective account of the evolution of the IVSC and the learning, challenges and solutions that arose and were developed along the way, we proceed to Section 5 where we offer some recommendations for future directions in relation to the IVSC on the basis of our experiences of designing and implementing the IVSC over the course of the TRIP Project, and this is informed also by the feedback from the key stakeholders who participated.

## SECTION 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.0 Overview

From our earlier reflections on the successes, challenges and learning outcomes which have emerged over the course of the IVSC project, we offer the following recommendations with a view to strengthening the foundation we have created and ensuring the sustainability of the IVSC going forward, drawing on our experiences over the 3 phases of piloting of the IVSC.

### Main improvements for the 4 editions of the IVSC, from 2023 to 2024



### 5.1 Improving the Mapping Documents

Mapping documents are essential for aligning the expectations and workflows among various institutions participating in the IVSC E-MODULE. Improving these documents requires a comprehensive understanding of each partner's academic structure, communication protocols, and educational objectives. This process should involve the creation of detailed documents that clearly outline roles, responsibilities, timelines, and deliverables for all parties involved.

Enhanced mapping documents should facilitate smooth operations across different time zones and institutional calendars, ensuring that all participants are aware of key milestones and deadlines. They should include guidelines for conflict resolution, procedural adjustments, and

regular updates that keep all stakeholders informed. Ideally, these documents would be developed collaboratively in an initial workshop that brings together coordinators from all institutions to discuss and harmonize their expectations and capabilities.

To further improve the utility of these documents, incorporating feedback from past iterations of the IVSC can be invaluable. Regular revisions based on participant feedback and evolving institutional needs will ensure that the mapping documents remain relevant and effective. This iterative process helps in building a robust framework that supports the dynamic nature of international collaborative projects.

## **5.2 Customizing the IVSC and adapting the Editions to Different Institutions**

The ideal setup for the IVSC E-MODULE should be tailored to the specific needs and circumstances of the organizing institutions. This flexibility allows the module to be more responsive to the varying technological capabilities, pedagogical approaches, and student engagement levels across different environments. Organizers should conduct thorough assessments of their institutions' strengths and limitations to design a module setup that maximizes educational impact.

While the E-MODULE can be customized in terms of delivery methods (balancing synchronous and asynchronous sessions) and tailored to the academic calendars of different institutions, it is essential not to compromise the value of virtual meetings. Beyond the five core synchronous meetings, additional asynchronous activities can be introduced to further enhance engagement and exploration. For instance, institutions with shorter academic terms may adopt a more intensive schedule, while those with longer terms can spread out the sessions without sacrificing the interactive components critical to the IVSC experience

Engaging stakeholders in the planning process is crucial. By involving faculty, administrators, and students in the decision-making process, organizers can ensure that the module setup not only addresses logistical and educational considerations but also aligns with the cultural and strategic objectives of each institution. This inclusive approach fosters a sense of ownership and commitment among all parties, enhancing the overall effectiveness of the module.



### **Customizing Delivery to Fit Institutional Needs and Profiles:**

The flexibility in structuring the IVSC E-MODULE to meet the needs of various organizers is critical. This adaptability allows for the integration of the module within existing courses or as a standalone offering. For instance, embedding the IVSC within existing curricula can enhance interdisciplinary learning by linking international collaborative projects with course-specific content. This approach leverages the existing framework of courses to introduce students to global perspectives within their fields of study, enriching their educational experience without requiring additional credits or separate enrolment.

Each university engaging with the IVSC E-MODULE brings its own approach to Internationalisation at Home (IaH), shaped by its specific priorities, existing partnerships, and the cultural context in which it operates. Recognizing these differences is critical when adapting the IVSC to various institutions. These disparities can influence everything from the module's content and language of instruction to the methods of collaboration and communication used. Universities may have different levels of experience with international projects, different strategic goals for internationalization, and varied resources which can affect their participation in the IVSC.

To effectively adapt the IVSC to these diverse institutional contexts, a detailed initial assessment of each partner's IaH practices and needs is essential. This assessment should consider the institution's current international partnerships, the scope of their international activities, and specific educational objectives related to internationalization. Based on this assessment, the IVSC can be customized to align with the institutional goals and capitalize on existing strengths and partnerships. For instance, institutions with strong ties in certain regions may focus on projects that leverage these relationships, while those looking to expand their international presence may engage in new, diverse collaborations through the IVSC.

### **Standalone and Embedded Models:**

Alternatively, rolling out the IVSC as a standalone module provides an opportunity for students to engage deeply with international perspectives independent of their regular coursework. This format is particularly beneficial for programs that aim to foster intensive intercultural communication and collaboration skills, offering students a dedicated space and time to focus on developing these competencies. Standalone versions can be particularly attractive as elective

courses or special programs that contribute to a student's internationalization experience at home.

### **Technological Adaptations for Diverse Learning Environments:**

When planning the IVSC setup, it's crucial to consider the logistical capabilities of participating institutions, especially in regions where students may rely more heavily on mobile devices than computers. For example, in many countries, students frequently use their smartphones for educational purposes due to easier access and lower costs compared to computers. Adapting the IVSC to be mobile-friendly ensures greater accessibility and participation. This could involve designing mobile-responsive interfaces, utilizing apps that are commonly used on smartphones, and ensuring that all module materials and communications are optimized for mobile usage.

### **Educational Materials and Support:**

Offering a variety of adaptable materials and resources is key to ensuring that the IVSC meets the diverse needs of different institutions. These materials should be designed with flexibility in mind, allowing educators to tailor them to their students' learning styles and the institution's educational standards. Additionally, training sessions for faculty and administrative staff can be customized to address the specific challenges and opportunities presented by their unique Internationalization at Home (IaH) practices. For example, while some institutions may favor survey tools for data collection, others might find these methods challenging and prefer alternative research approaches. To support this, the IVSC training guide includes a comprehensive resource bank covering all four themes—environment, race, gender, and inclusion. This extensive and thorough resource bank can be continuously enriched by contributions from both educators and participants, fostering a collaborative and evolving learning experience.

### **Enhancing Mobile Accessibility:**

To effectively cater to mobile users, the IVSC platform should incorporate features that are tailored for a mobile-first experience. This includes simplified navigation, compressed multimedia content for quicker loading, and integration with mobile-specific features such as push notifications for updates and reminders. By prioritizing mobile compatibility, the IVSC can accommodate a broader demographic of students, ensuring that those who primarily rely on smartphones for internet access are not disadvantaged.

Ultimately, the choice between embedding the IVSC in existing courses or offering it as a standalone module should be guided by the specific educational goals of the institution and the needs of the students. Each approach offers distinct benefits, and the decision should align with the strategic educational objectives of participating institutions. Furthermore, ensuring that the IVSC is accessible on the devices most commonly used by students is crucial for fostering inclusive and effective international collaboration. This adaptability not only enhances student engagement but also ensures that the IVSC remains a practical and accessible option for international education across diverse educational landscapes.

### **Monitoring and Feedback:**

Continuous monitoring and feedback mechanisms are essential to understand how the IVSC is being implemented across different institutions. Regular reviews and updates based on feedback from participants can help refine the module to better serve a diverse range of institutions. This feedback loop is crucial for ongoing improvement and ensuring that the module remains relevant and effective in achieving its internationalization goals at each partner university.

By acknowledging the varied Internationalisation at Home practices and partnerships each university brings to the IVSC, the program can be effectively adapted to meet diverse institutional needs. This tailored approach not only enhances the relevance and impact of the IVSC but also supports the broader objectives of international education by fostering inclusive and sustainable internationalization practices across global higher education landscapes.

### **5.3 Promoting the IVSC to New Partners**

Expanding the network of institutions participating in the IVSC E-MODULE requires a proactive approach to promotion and outreach. This involves highlighting the unique benefits of the program, such as its capacity to enhance intercultural competence and digital literacy among students. Effective promotional strategies may include presenting at international education conferences, publishing articles in academic journals, and sharing success stories and testimonials from past participants.

To attract new partners, it is important to demonstrate the tangible outcomes of the E-MODULE. This can be achieved by showcasing the collaborative projects developed by students, the skills they acquire, and the academic recognition they receive. Additionally,

organizing webinars or open days where prospective partners can observe the module in action and interact with current participants and organizers can be particularly effective.

Developing a robust online presence for the IVSC can also aid in recruitment efforts. A well-maintained website, active social media channels, and a regular newsletter can keep the program visible and attractive to potential partners. These platforms can also facilitate networking opportunities, where educators and institutions looking to enhance their internationalization strategies can connect and collaborate.

The TRIP IVSC has worked on a number of communication tools from videos to newsletters which serve as a model for future development.

#### **5.4 Working on the Calendar**

Synchronizing academic calendars among international institutions is a critical challenge in managing the IVSC E-MODULE. Effective calendar management ensures that all participants are able to engage with the module without conflicts with their local academic responsibilities. This requires detailed planning and regular communication between partner coordinators to align start dates, key activities, and evaluation periods.

Technology can play a significant role in managing the calendar efficiently. Utilizing shared online calendars, scheduling tools, and real-time updates can help coordinators keep track of the module's timeline and make adjustments as needed. These tools also assist students and faculty in managing their participation alongside their regular academic duties.

Anticipating potential conflicts and preparing contingency plans is essential for smooth operation. Holiday periods, examination weeks, and special events should be considered when planning the IVSC schedule. Regularly updating partners on any changes in the academic calendar and providing flexibility in participation during unexpected disruptions can help maintain the continuity and integrity of the module.

**Synchronizing Academic Calendars:**

Coordinating the IVSC academic calendars among various international institutions is a complex task, given the diverse academic schedules, holidays, and examination periods across countries. Effective calendar management ensures that participants can engage with the module without significant conflicts with their local academic responsibilities. This meticulous alignment involves not only aligning start and end dates but also synchronizing key activities and evaluation periods to accommodate the various institutional timelines.

**Realistic Expectations and Independent Progress:**

Despite best efforts, achieving perfect calendar alignment across multiple international institutions is often not feasible. Students should be informed at the outset that they may need to progress independently at times and be prepared to catch up when synchronized activities resume. This expectation should be clearly communicated to ensure that students are prepared to manage their schedules effectively. Encouraging students to develop self-directed learning skills and to take initiative during off-sync periods can help maintain momentum and continuity in their projects.

**Flexibility and Adaptability in Scheduling:**

The IVSC should be designed with flexibility to accommodate unsynchronized periods, allowing students to work asynchronously when necessary. This might include providing recorded materials, flexible submission deadlines, and independent study tasks that can be completed at different times. Such flexibility helps students from different time zones and academic calendars to participate fully without being disadvantaged by differences in scheduling.

**Utilizing Technology for Effective Coordination:**

Advanced planning tools and collaborative software can be instrumental in managing the IVSC calendar effectively. Shared online calendars, scheduling tools, and real-time updates can help coordinators and students keep track of the module's timeline and make adjustments as needed. These tools assist in minimizing scheduling conflicts and provide a platform for students to document their progress, which can be particularly useful during periods when independent work is necessary.

**Recommendation for Continuous Monitoring:**

Regular monitoring and proactive communication are key to managing the diverse schedules of an international cohort. Coordinators should regularly check in with students and faculty to ensure they are aware of upcoming synchronized sessions and deadlines. Providing regular updates and reminders can help mitigate the challenges of differing academic calendars and ensure that all students are adequately prepared for periods of independent learning.

By setting clear expectations for independent progress and utilizing flexible scheduling and technology, the IVSC can accommodate the varied academic calendars of international partners effectively. This approach not only respects the institutional constraints of each partner but also empowers students to take control of their learning, fostering skills that are valuable in both academic and professional contexts.

**5.5 Adapting the Editions to Different Time Frames****Flexibility in Course Duration:**

The IVSC E-MODULE offers exceptional flexibility in its delivery format, which is crucial to accommodate the varying academic terms and structures of different institutions. To effectively cater to this diversity, the IVSC is available in multiple duration formats, including condensed 3-week versions, standard 5-week versions, and extended 8-week versions. This range allows institutions to select a model that best fits their academic schedule and the availability of their students.

**Customization Based on Institutional Needs:**

Each version of the IVSC is designed to maintain the integrity of the educational experience while adapting to the specific time constraints of the partner institutions. For instance, the 3-week version is highly intensive and suitable for short-term inter-session periods often found in summer or winter breaks. The 5-week version aligns well with typical half-semester courses, providing a balanced pace that allows for deeper exploration of topics. The 8-week version offers the most comprehensive engagement, ideal for embedding within a full-term course, allowing for extensive interaction, project development, and reflection.

**Adaptive Course Design:**

Adapting the length of the course does not simply mean compressing or stretching the same content. Instead, each version is thoughtfully designed to optimize the learning objectives and outcomes for its duration. This involves scaling the complexity and depth of projects, adjusting the workload, and modifying assessment methods to suit the shorter or longer time frames. This ensures that regardless of the chosen duration, all students receive a robust and complete educational experience that is both manageable and engaging.

**Benefits of Flexible Course Lengths:**

Offering variable course lengths provides significant advantages. It enhances the IVSC's accessibility and appeal to a broader range of institutions, including those with rigid academic structures or those looking for short-term international experiences for their students. It also allows institutions to pilot the IVSC in shorter formats before committing to longer durations, which can help in gradually integrating international collaborative projects into their curricula.

**Implementation Strategies:**

To effectively implement these different course lengths, clear guidelines and support materials tailored to each version are essential. This includes specific training for faculty on how to manage the pacing of content delivery and student engagement across different formats. Additionally, providing examples of successful implementations from other institutions can help new participants visualize how to integrate the IVSC into their own academic environments.

The availability of 3, 5, and 8-week versions of the IVSC E-MODULE exemplifies its adaptability to the diverse needs and structures of global educational institutions. By offering these options, the IVSC ensures that international collaboration and intercultural learning are accessible to all students, regardless of their institutional constraints or academic calendars. This flexibility not only broadens the reach of the IVSC but also enhances its effectiveness in fostering global competencies among students.

**5.6 Criteria to deliver diploma**

The criteria for obtaining the IVSC end-of-course certificate vary depending on the version of the IVSC in which participants are enrolled. For IVSC versions embedded within a course, successful completion of the IVSC is a requirement for course validation. Participants must

demonstrate commitment and active engagement throughout the project, fulfilling their roles as participants, team members, or mentors by completing assigned tasks diligently. In addition to the end-of-course certificate, participants who meet these criteria are also eligible to receive a digital award recognizing their contributions and achievements in the IVSC.

Defining the criteria for awarding the diploma becomes slightly more complicated when the IVSC is not embedded in a course and student participation is optional and voluntary. Although absence from a working session can be excused, participants, teamchairs and mentors will only be awarded a diploma if they have shown continuous involvement in the project, taken part in the various stages of designing the project and producing the video, and taken part in the IVSC end-of-course juries when these fell within a time slot compatible with their timetable. **A student who only attended the first and last work sessions cannot therefore be considered a participant.** Nevertheless, varying degrees of involvement are to be expected and accepted: a student with little involvement in the design of the project but who is particularly proactive in producing the final video and/or the team logo may be considered for an IVSC diploma.

Thus, in accordance with the principles of Inclusive Teaching, we encourage the partners to show flexibility with their voluntary students, particularly when a one-off lack of attendance does not jeopardise the progress of the project.

### **5.7 Planning for the Final Event:**

The final event of the IVSC E-MODULE is a critical component that showcases the culmination of students' collaborative efforts. Planning for this event involves logistical considerations such as choosing a suitable virtual platform that can accommodate participants from various time zones and technical backgrounds, ensuring that all students can present their work effectively.

The event should be designed to not only display student projects but also to facilitate interaction among participants. This could include Q&A sessions, breakout rooms for detailed discussions, and even virtual networking opportunities. Such interactions enrich the learning experience and foster a sense of community among participants from different cultural and academic backgrounds.

Promoting the final event to a broader audience, including other educational institutions, industry partners, and the public, can enhance the visibility of the students' work and the IVSC



program. This promotion can also attract potential new partners and sponsors, thereby supporting the sustainability and expansion of the E-MODULE.

## **5.8. Sharing Feedback**

Establishing a robust feedback mechanism is essential for the continuous improvement of the IVSC E-MODULE. This mechanism should capture insights from a wide range of stakeholders, including students, faculty, and institutional partners, and should be easy to access and use.

Feedback should be collected at multiple points throughout the module, not just at the end. This allows for timely adjustments to the curriculum, teaching methods, and logistical arrangements, thereby enhancing the learning experience in real-time. Tools such as online surveys, focus groups, and digital forums can facilitate ongoing feedback collection.

Analyzing and acting on the feedback is as important as collecting it. Organizers should regularly review feedback to identify common themes and areas for improvement. Sharing how feedback has been implemented to improve the module can also help build trust and engagement among participants.

## **5.9 Optimizing the Opportunities for International Students to Mix:**

Creating a truly collaborative and inclusive environment is key to optimizing interactions among international students. This involves structuring the module to include mixed international teams on projects, ensuring that students from different cultural backgrounds have the opportunity to work together and learn from each other.

Cultural exchange activities can be embedded within the teamcher's activities to further enhance intercultural interaction. These might include virtual cultural nights, shared online social spaces, and peer-to-peer language practice sessions, which can help students appreciate and understand diverse cultural perspectives.

Technology plays a critical role in facilitating seamless interaction among international students. Utilizing reliable and accessible communication tools ensures that all students can

participate fully in collaborative activities. Training sessions on how to use these tools effectively can also be provided to maximize student engagement.

### **5.10 Ensuring Engagement Throughout the Project**

Maintaining student engagement in a virtual module over time requires a dynamic and interactive curriculum that actively involves students in their learning. This can include hands-on projects, real-time collaborative tasks, and interactive lectures with opportunities for students to contribute and interact.

Gamification strategies can also be employed to enhance engagement. Introducing elements such as points, badges, and leaderboards for completing certain tasks or challenges can motivate students and make the learning experience more engaging.

Regular feedback and recognition of student efforts are vital. Providing constructive feedback on assignments and recognizing outstanding contributions during sessions can help sustain student interest and motivation throughout the module.

### **5.11 Commitment Awareness and Ensuring the Balance Between Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation**

Educating students about the commitments required for successful participation in the IVSC and fostering an environment that promotes both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are essential. This involves clear communication about the expectations, workload, and learning outcomes of the module.

Intrinsic motivation can be nurtured by connecting the learning activities to students' personal interests and career goals, thereby making the learning experience more relevant and rewarding. Facilitators can encourage this by allowing students some degree of choice in project topics or methods.

Extrinsic motivators such as certificates, digital badges, or course credits can also be crucial in sustaining student commitment. These recognitions should be aligned with the achievements and reflect meaningful accomplishments within the IVSC.

### **5.12 Close Follow-Up of Sessions and Reporting Systems**

Implementing effective follow-up mechanisms for each session ensures that all participants are progressing as expected. This can involve regular check-ins with students and faculty, as well as the use of analytics tools to monitor participation and engagement levels.

Reporting systems should be established to regularly update all stakeholders, including institutional partners and funders, on the progress of the module. These reports should provide insights into participation rates, engagement levels, and academic performance, among other metrics.

Prompt identification and resolution of issues are crucial. Regular follow-ups enable the early detection of problems, whether they are technological, pedagogical, or logistical, allowing timely interventions to address these challenges before they impact the learning experience.

### **5.13 Adapting the Evaluation to the Institutional Objective**

The evaluation methods of the IVSC should be flexible enough to align with the educational goals of the participating institutions. This might involve adapting assessment formats to meet different academic standards or professional requirements.

Collaborative evaluation strategies can be developed to ensure that assessments are fair and comprehensive. This can include peer reviews, project-based assessments, and presentations that allow students to demonstrate their understanding in various formats.

Ongoing dialogue with institutional partners is necessary to ensure that the evaluation methods remain relevant and effective. This includes regular reviews of the assessment criteria and methods to ensure they continue to meet the evolving needs of the institutions and students.

## **5.14 Fostering Inclusion in the IVSC E-MODULE**

### **Commitment to Inclusive Practices:**

Inclusion is a fundamental aspect of the IVSC E-MODULE, ensuring that all participants, regardless of their backgrounds, have equitable access to and can benefit from the international learning experience. This commitment to inclusion involves recognizing and addressing the diverse needs of students from different socio-economic, cultural, and educational backgrounds. The IVSC should be designed to be accessible to students with disabilities, those from underrepresented communities, and non-traditional learners.

### **Strategies for Inclusive Engagement:**

To foster an inclusive environment, the IVSC must incorporate universal design principles in its curriculum development. This means providing multiple means of engagement, representation, and expression that cater to a variety of learning styles and preferences. For example, course materials should be available in different formats (text, audio, video), and activities should allow for various forms of participation to accommodate different abilities and preferences.

Language is another critical consideration for inclusion. Offering translation services or bilingual materials can help non-native speakers participate fully. Similarly, culturally sensitive content that reflects the values and norms of diverse student populations can enhance the relevance and accessibility of the module.

### **Building a Supportive Community:**

Creating a supportive community within the IVSC involves facilitating connections and interactions among students that go beyond academic collaboration. This could include peer mentoring programs, discussion forums, and social events that encourage informal interactions and help build relationships among participants from different parts of the world.

Training for facilitators and teachers on cultural competence and inclusive teaching practices is crucial. They should be equipped to create a welcoming and supportive environment, recognize and address potential biases, and respond effectively to the diverse needs of their students.

**Monitoring and Enhancing Inclusive Practices:**

Regular assessment of the inclusivity of the IVSC is essential. This can be done through surveys and feedback mechanisms that specifically ask about issues of access, engagement, and satisfaction among underrepresented groups. Data collected from these assessments can guide ongoing adjustments to the program to better serve all participants.

Sharing best practices and lessons learned about fostering inclusion within the IVSC with the wider academic community can also help improve the module and contribute to broader efforts to enhance inclusivity in international education.

By integrating these inclusive practices into every aspect of the IVSC E-MODULE, organizers can ensure that the program not only enriches the academic experience of all students but also promotes equity and diversity within the international education community. This proactive approach to inclusion will help prepare students to be global citizens who are aware of and appreciate diversity in all its forms.

**5.15 Final Word on Improvement Cycles of the IVSC**

Establishing a structured process for reviewing and updating the IVSC E-MODULE is essential for its continual improvement. This process should involve regular evaluation cycles where feedback from all stakeholders is gathered, analyzed, and used to make informed adjustments to the module.

Reflective practice among the faculty and administrative staff involved in the IVSC is crucial. Encouraging staff to reflect on their experiences and share insights can provide valuable information that helps refine the module's design and delivery.

Building a culture of continuous improvement can help ensure that the IVSC remains a dynamic and responsive educational offering. This involves not only regular updates but also the willingness to experiment with new approaches and technologies that could enhance the educational experience for all participants.

## **5.16 Summary**

The proposed recommendations for the IVSC are intended to significantly enhance the project's impact and sustainability, fostering a more inclusive and comprehensive approach to environmental education. By implementing these suggestions, the IVSC can extend its reach, deepen its educational impact, and further its goal of empowering individuals with disabilities through increased accessibility and engagement. As the project moves forward, it is imperative to maintain a flexible and adaptive approach, continually assessing the effectiveness of these strategies and making necessary adjustments. In doing so, the IVSC will not only uphold its commitment to inclusivity but will also set a precedent for other initiatives striving to integrate environmental education with accessibility. Through sustained effort and commitment, the IVSC will continue to break barriers and build bridges, ensuring that environmental advocacy is a realm accessible to all, irrespective of physical or linguistic limitations.

## **SECTION SIX: APPENDICES**

### **Appendix 1: TRIP Project Outcomes**



#### **Project Result 1 - Focus on Teacher and Staff Upskilling**

TRIP PR1 involves mapping existing related policies, training, and practice at TRIP partner member institutions through a survey and staff interviews. These data have informed the development of an online continuing professional development (CPD) course for academic and support staff at HEIs. PR1 will produce a special edition of a HE journal detailing the design and development of this CPD.

#### **Project Result 2 - Focus on Student Upskilling**

TRIP PR2 focuses on the production of training for students in HE. This training takes the form of virtual challenge-based workshops for students at all levels. Students will work in multicultural, inter-institutional teams to focus on intercultural awareness around themes of environment, gender equality, and race equality. PR2 will produce a training manual for other HEIs to follow along with virtual training seminars and a public awareness campaign targeted at promoting the social good of the training.

#### **Project Result 3 - Focus on Governance and Quality Assurance**

TRIP PR3 aims at creating a comprehensive, transnationally accepted definition of a responsible, international university. It will create a toolkit for HEIs to develop inclusive internationalisation at home, as well as a Certificate in Quality Assured Internationalisation at Home.

## Appendix 2: TRIP Combines UDL and CRT to Support IIaH



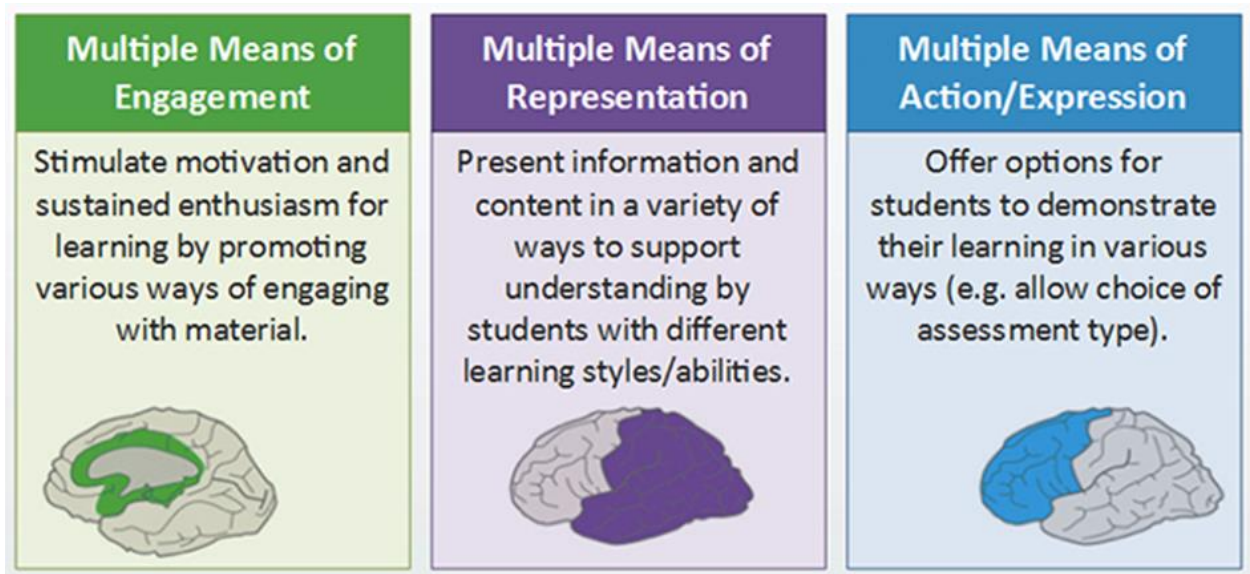
Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a set of principles for curriculum development that give all individuals equal opportunities to learn, including Students with Disabilities. UDL aims to improve the educational experience of all students by introducing more flexible methods of teaching, assessment and service provision to cater for the diversity of learners in our classrooms. This approach is underpinned by research in the field of neuroscience and is designed to improve the learning experience and outcomes for all students.

The UDL Guidelines are a tool used in the implementation of Universal Design for Learning, a framework to improve and optimize teaching and learning for all people based on scientific insights into how humans learn. [Learn more about the Universal Design for Learning framework](#) from CAST. The UDL Guidelines can be used by educators, curriculum developers, researchers, parents, and anyone else who wants to implement the UDL framework in a learning environment. These guidelines offer a set of concrete suggestions that can be applied to any discipline or domain to ensure that all learners can access and participate in meaningful, challenging learning opportunities.

Providing a fully inclusive learning environment is complex and creating a culture of engagement and inclusion that works for all students requires a shift in thinking and a change of behavior at an institutional level. In this ever-changing and increasingly diverse further and higher education landscape, **Universal Design for Learning** (UDL) provides an effective framework to improve the learning experience of all students within the mainstream teaching environment.



The UDL guidelines provided by US organisation CAST are based on the idea that there is no such thing as a ‘typical’ or ‘average’ student, that all students learn differently and that to successfully teach for all students, we have to introduce greater flexibility into teaching and learning practice. They say that educators should follow 3 core principles when designing learning experiences, building in:



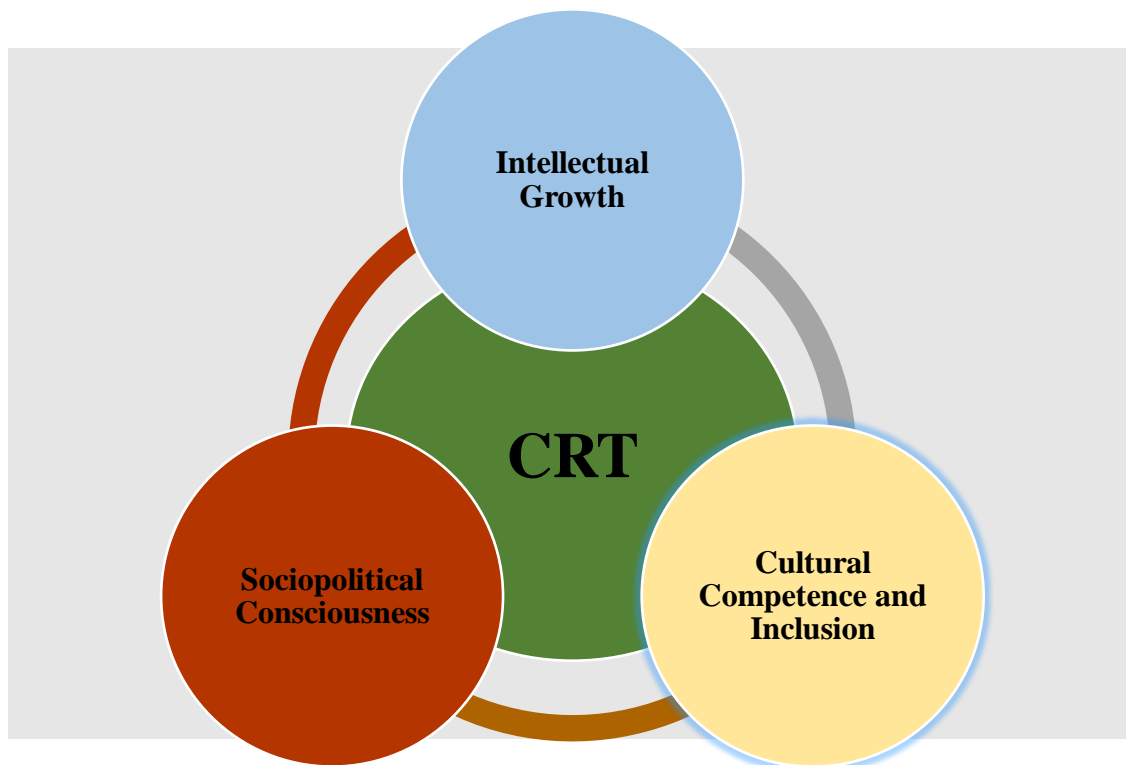
From this review of UDL and its core underlying principles, we highlight the core features of Culturally Responsive Teaching as a compatible approach to draw on for the purpose of ensuring that the HE curriculum is accessible and relevant to all members of our campus communities.

### **Features and Goals of Culturally Responsive Teaching**

Culturally responsive teaching (CRT) is an inclusive pedagogical approach that recognises, respects, and uses students’ identities and diverse backgrounds as meaningful sources for creating optimal learning environments (Hawkins & Norton, 2009; Lucas & Villegas, 2013; Nieto, 2000). From this perspective, educators are prompted to design instruction that takes into account students’ cultural diversity which should be viewed as strengths rather than deficits. In practice, this means that they explore flexible options to value cultural diversity and include multicultural perspectives in the curriculum, as well as taking greater account of it in classroom pedagogy and assessment.

Conceived originally in the context of the integration of indigenous and marginalised ethnic groups in settings including North America and New Zealand, the majority of this practice has been undertaken in a primary or secondary school setting with increasing migration has to growing calls for teachers from all discipline subject backgrounds to develop the skills and knowledge needed to teach migrant pupils from culturally diverse backgrounds and with varying abilities in the language of instruction (Farrell and Masterson 2023). While there have been increasing discussions and calls for CRT to be implemented within higher education environments in line with growing cultural diversity on university campuses, research on experiences in higher education remains somewhat limited (Baumgartner and Johnson-Bailey, 2008).

As a pedagogical approach, CRT is commonly understood to comprise of three interconnected elements (Ladson-Billings 2014, Johnson 2022). These elements are illustrated in Figure 7 and are discussed in more detail following this for readers who are unfamiliar with this approach.



*Figure 7: Core Principles of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT)*

As indicated in Figure 4, the first element of CRT is **intellectual growth**. This is approached holistically across social, emotional, spiritual, creative, and intellectual dimensions. Problem-solving and creating outputs that are valued in a real-world setting are key areas for skills development as part of this transformational process with the ultimate goal of enabling students to achieve their full potential and becoming agents of change for the betterment of self and society (Banks, 2002; Hammond, 2015, Johnson 2022).

The second element of CRT is **cultural competence and inclusion**. Hollins (1996) suggests that education designed to include ethnically diverse students incorporates “culturally mediated cognition, culturally appropriate social situations for learning, and culturally valued knowledge in curriculum content” (p. 13). Accordingly, CRT is premised on the idea that culture is central to student learning and that it should be used as the basis for learning. In practice, this means showing an interest in students’ cultures and lived experiences and creating opportunities for students to bring their cultures, histories, values and perspectives into the classroom. It also means ensuring that multiple communication styles are recognised to enable students from different backgrounds to appreciate their own ways of communicating while also learning to develop fluency in another (Hammond 2015). In the IaH context, this aspect is of particular relevance for international and domestic students whose first language and culture are other than the dominant language and culture of the host institution.

The third element is **socio-political consciousness**. This means encouraging students to critically examine established ways of thinking, frameworks, and practices, including their own, through a racial equity and social justice lens (Lee & Walsh, 2017). It also means providing them with the tools to address social, cultural, economic, and political problems with a view to enabling them to become agents of change in addressing social justice and racial equity issues (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 2016; Johnson, 2006). For educator, this approach calls for a move away from traditional authoritarian, top-down relationships based on power and authority and a move towards more equal relationships. It also requires teachers and students alike to critically interrogate commonly-held ethno-centric cultural perspectives, including those they may hold themselves, as a starting point to developing a more ethno-relativistic mind-set which is more conducive for intercultural skills development (Deardoff, 2006).

CRT is thereby conceived as transformative in nature and to involve critical consciousness raising, self-actualization and ultimately, empowerment for students and educators alike. Accordingly, the TRIP pedagogical approach, which is drawn on for the teaching of the IVSC module, can facilitate the realisation of transformational change in ways that are realistic and sustainable to help realise the goals and vision for this component of the project.

This section has highlighted the core features and goals of the TRIP pedagogical approach highlighting the innovation and relevance of combining UDL and CRT. In Section X which follows, the focus is on the Challenge-based Learning Approach, which also underpins the IVSC module from the perspective of how students are required to engage throughout this course.

## Appendix 3: Challenge-based Learning Origins and Development



In academic literature, as pointed out by Gallagher & Savage, Challenge-based learning (CBL) has a ‘mass of different approaches using the same term in different ways creates challenges in its definition and in conceptualizing its research landscape’ (2020)<sup>23</sup>. However, CBL is generally understood as

a learning experience where the learning takes places [*sic*] through the identification, analysis and design of a solution to a sociotechnical problem. The learning experience is typically multidisciplinary, takes place in an international context and aims to find a collaboratively developed solution, which is environmentally, socially and economically sustainable. (quoted in G&S 2020. Malmqvist, Rådberg, and Lundqvist, 2015)<sup>24</sup>

One of the earliest forerunners of this approach is Challenge-based instruction (CBI) which can be traced to the ‘STAR Legacy Cycle.’ This methodology was developed by researchers at the Vanderbilt-Northwestern-Harvard-MIT Engineering Research Center (Gallagher & Savage, 2020). The STAR Legacy Cycle has six stages: ‘challenge, generate ideas, multiple

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<sup>23</sup> Silvia Elena Gallagher & Timothy Savage (2020): Challenge-based learning in higher education: an exploratory literature review, *Teaching in Higher Education*, DOI: 10.1080/13562517.2020.1863354

<sup>24</sup> Malmqvist, Johan, Kamilla Kohn Rådberg and Ulrika Lundqvist. “Comparative analysis of challenge-based learning experiences.” (2015).

perspectives, research and revise, test your mettle, and go public' (xxx QUOTED IN G&S, Birol et al. 2002)<sup>25</sup>.

CBL's contemporary place in education also includes methods which have origins in the "Apple Classrooms of Tomorrow-Today" (ACOT2) project initiated and documented by Apple, Inc. in 2008 to identify essential design principles for a 21st-century learning environment. The project suggests 'Students should be engaged in relevant and contextual problem-based and project-based learning designed to apply 21st-century skills and that is provided using a multi-disciplinary approach' (Apple, 2008)<sup>26</sup>. In an Apple Classrooms document, Nicholas and Cator describe the CBL methodology as beginning

with a big idea and cascades to the following: the essential question; the challenge; guiding questions, activities, and resources; determining and articulating the solution; taking action by implementing the solution; assessment; and publishing the solution and sharing it with the world. Reflection and informative assessment are an important part of the process at every stage as they reinforce learning and prepare students for what is coming next. (2008)

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<sup>25</sup> G. Birol, A. F. McKenna, H. D. Smith, T. D. Giorgio and S. P. Brophy, "Integration of the "How people learn" framework into educational module development and implementation in biotechnology," *Proceedings of the Second Joint 24th Annual Conference and the Annual Fall Meeting of the Biomedical Engineering Society [Engineering in Medicine and Biology]*, Houston, TX, USA, 2002, pp. 2640-2641 vol.3, doi: 10.1109/IEMBS.2002.1053468.

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.apple.com/ca/education/docs/Apple-ACOT2Whitepaper.pdf>

## Appendix 4: Digital Upskilling Embedded into Five Sessions of IVSC E-MODULE



Digital upskilling is integrated into each session of the IVSC E-MODULE. In this document, examples of how participants can upgrade their digital skills throughout the module are explained in detail, including links to useful tools:

**Session 1: Big Idea Brainstorming and Digital Tool Exploration** In line with the CBL (Challenge-based Learning) approach, Session 1 centers around stimulating the generation of a "Big Idea." During this interactive session, students will utilize brainstorming tools like "Jamboard" to spark their creative ideas. Teamchairs will facilitate the process by opening a fresh Jamboard document and providing guiding headings to structure the brainstorming exercise.

The versatility of the Jamboard tool will be highlighted, not only for brainstorming the "Big Idea" but also for exploring and identifying useful digital tools that can be shared and utilized throughout the entire project. In this regard, teamchairs will encourage students to identify the specific digital tools they intend to learn and apply in subsequent sessions.

An essential aspect of Session 1 is to ensure participants become familiar with the "Jamboard" tool itself, as it holds significant value in the CBL methodology. By introducing students to this tool early on, they can grasp its functionalities and employ it confidently during the project. Moreover, the session will serve as a springboard for introducing other relevant digital tools, identified collaboratively in Session 1, thereby promoting student autonomy and engagement throughout the program.

**Session 2: Finalization of Topic/Idea + Team Logo** In this session, students will learn to use logo creation tools and explore exercises related to selecting appropriate images that align with their theme. Useful websites, such as LOOKA (<https://looka.com/logo-maker/>), will be introduced to facilitate the logo creation process. Teamchens will conduct activities with their groups to finalize ideas and team logos.

**Session 3: Tools to Source Information** Participants will be shown suitable tools to source relevant information. These may include Google Scholar, the individual institutions' library resources, etc., but please note that students are not required to collect data, as ethical approval from their institutions would be required for this.

**Session 4: Finalization of a One-to-Three Minute Video "Trailer" of Idea** During this session, the Pechakucha methodology (<https://www.pechakucha.com/>) will be demonstrated, emphasizing the concept of presenting concise information using 20-second slides. Students will apply the Pechakucha principle to create a video trailer of no more than three minutes (half a "Pechakucha"). Additionally, participants will be introduced to video production and editing tools, which will be detailed in the appendices.

**Session 5: Virtual Challenge Question Session / Panel & Q&A** This session will involve the Virtual Challenge question session, where participants engage in interactive discussions and receive feedback from the evaluation panel. Moreover, this session aims to promote a reflexive posture among students, encouraging them to critically reflect on their progress, achievements, and areas for improvement. To facilitate this reflective process, a feedback questionnaire (templates available in the appendices) will be thoughtfully employed. Participants will have the chance to provide valuable feedback on their learning journey, the efficacy of the training methodologies, and their overall experience in the IVSC program.

The IVSC training program emphasizes digital upskilling throughout each module, empowering participants with essential tools and skills to excel in their respective tasks. Through this digital proficiency, participants can effectively tackle the challenges posed by the program and deliver exceptional outcomes.



## Appendix 5: Exemplar of Digital Certificate



## Appendix 6: Example of Mapping Document

University name	Name of institutional coordinator	Email Address Institutional Coordinator	Associate partners	Embedded or Standalone	Embedded Version 1 or 2	Standalone Preferred Dates and duration	Holidays

Thematic Area	Name of Teamcher Per Group	Teamcher Email	Language level	Student Level (UG/MA/Ph D)	Class time if known	Number of participanting learners

## **Appendix 7: TRIP Training Videos**

Please find an example of Training video on the following link:

<https://view.genial.ly/6513e2e3f46c5f0010e3c660>

## Appendix 8: TRIP IVSC Teamcher/Mentor Feedback Form

Two questions were asked to participants of the IVSC about the initial training. These questions were embedded in the general feedback form completed by participants after the running of the challenge, but it can be given right after the completion of the Training:

### Training Provided

Please consider the quality of training provided to IVSC participants.

	Poor	Fairly good	Good	Very good	Excellent
For teamchers/ mentors	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
For learners	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### Suggestions for Teamcher/Mentor Training

Please provide suggestions on how the training for teamchers and mentors might be improved.

## Appendix 9: IVSC E-MODULE Team-building Training Examples



### 1. First step: Getting to know each other. Examples:

- **Birthmap:** Understanding someone's origins can provide valuable insight into their life journey and current position. For this activity, have the meeting host or facilitator display a world map on a screen or in the conference room. As each team member shares their birthplace, place a pin on the map to mark it. After finished, participants discuss the results.
- **Wordcloud:** Ask participants different questions e.g. about the languages they speak, the cultures they identify with, what they like...
- **Emoji mood board:** have your team choose 3-5 emojis that capture their current feelings. Then, each person can share their chosen emojis along with any explanation they feel comfortable providing. This lighthearted activity encourages openness and helps build a supportive team environment.
- **One Truth and One Lie:** Have each participant tell one truth and one lie about themselves and ask the rest of the participants if they can tell which is which.

### 2. Second step: **Rules and Conflict Resolution**

Teamchairs should explain the rules of the sessions and how they will be respected.

Considering the sensitivity of the subjects to be discussed with Challenge-based learners, along with their diverse and intercultural backgrounds, it's imperative to establish a safe and inclusive environment during the sessions where all individuals, irrespective of their gender, faith, "race", ethnicity, ability, class, or citizenship status, are welcomed and celebrated. To achieve this, it

is essential to set ground rules at the outset of the first session that everyone agrees to. These rules should include:

- **Acknowledging Privilege:** Emphasize that participants may have various forms of privilege, such as being white, able-bodied, middle-class, settled, cisgender, etc. While valuing every member's contributions, it's vital to recognize and learn when to listen rather than speak. This includes not speaking over people, speaking on behalf of groups or individuals when you do not have the same lived experiences, and speaking at length when other's wish to speak.
- **Respecting Privacy:** Participants should commit to not discussing an individual's personal experiences outside the meeting space, leaking information about other participants (doxing), or asking invasive questions about other members.
- **Structured Communication:** Encourage everyone to raise their hand to speak, wait their turn, and be mindful of not dominating the conversation.
- **Respectful Interactions:** Emphasize the importance of respectful interactions. Participants should think before they speak, considering whether their comments could be offensive or triggering to others. Mistakes can happen: as long as something is said that doesn't intentionally cause harm and you are willing to apologise, it is fine.
- **Civil Discourse:** Stress that disagreements are natural, but discussions must remain civil and not become personal attacks.
- **Active Listening and Support:** Encourage active listening and support for one another.

It should be explicitly stated that any form of discrimination, including racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, slut-shaming, victim-blaming, ableist language, or any other type, will not be tolerated.

In the event that the code of conduct is breached, whether by a teacher or a learner, the session may be paused or terminated. It is advisable to inform mentors or coordinators about such incidents. Repeatedly disruptive or offensive participants may be removed, but they can potentially be invited back if the group reaches a consensus and if the removed member is willing to engage in accountability meetings with the complainant, the mentor and the IPC coordinator. Their reinstatement should depend on their willingness to acknowledge their actions, take steps to repair relationships with others, and cease causing harm in the immediate context. Failure to do so may result in continued exclusion from participation.

## Appendix 10 IVSC TRIP Learner Training Guidelines and Materials



### 1. IVSC Materials and Resources

The Teamcher has access to a range of comprehensive lesson plans and resources relating to each of the above thematic areas. They can also develop their own lesson plans and use their own resources and materials.

All materials and resources used in the IVSC should be:

- Inclusive, accessible and reflective of the principles of UD (See IVSC guide for details);
- Varied (use existing materials adapted to TRIP, or new materials-articles, videos, podcasts);
- Critically-oriented, to support critical thinking development;
- Reflective of cross-cultural perspectives to create opportunities for upskilling in intercultural competence;
- Informative, engaging and aesthetically appealing, and of a high quality;
- Evocative of an effective response (empathy, values & openness through representation for all, to increase memorability);
- Adaptable, to ensure sustainability of these teaching resources;
- Reflective of the CBL approach (create opportunities for interaction, high level of student involvement and opportunities for students to articulate views and perspectives);
- Provide additional opportunities for foreign language learning regardless of subject.

### 2. IVSC Teamcher Scaffolding Supports and Guidelines

To help guide the learners through all stages of the IVSC, Teamchers will have access to a range of resources and training guides. In addition to these materials, we are also providing a range of **scaffolding supports** that can be used as outlined below:

- Guide students in how to work effectively and collaboratively in multicultural and inter-institutional groups. For example, facilitate the assignment of roles within the groups, help the groups to set goals and agree tasks, guide the group members in agreeing who will complete the tasks, guide the groups in scheduling time to work on the CBL outside of the virtual teaching block sessions, guide the groups in how to engage remotely with each other in progressing the task.
- Review all materials/resources for brevity and clarity to ensure learners have a clear understanding of the sessions' purpose and their tasks.
- Try to use underlining, highlighting, and arrows to call attention to crucial ideas to boost student retention. Focus on key, necessary information.
- After each session, check in with learners to see how well they understood the directions and objectives.
- Before exploring a new topic—or after having learners read an introductory text—learners can be asked to identify words that confuse them, or you can draw up your own list of key terms that all learners should know beforehand.
- Follow UDL principles and provide multiple ways for learners to engage with the material. For example, using multimodal materials and resources to meet the needs of diverse learners.
- Guide learners in developing a range of learning strategies to help them learn new material and manage the learning process in achieving the goals of the IVSC. For example, metacognitive questions provide students with a template for interrogating new material, putting them on the path to becoming independent learners. Students can ask questions like these:
  - What stands out to me about this new material? What makes me curious?
  - Which parts or terms are unfamiliar to me and which, if any, do I recognize?
  - How does this connect with what I already know?
  - What follow-up questions do I have?
  - Why is this idea important?
  - How is it linked to the theme of the challenge?
  - What goals do I need to create in order to progress development of the challenge?



- Concept-checking and pre-session quizzes can be used to activate prior knowledge regarding information to be introduced in a session or to spark interest and thought processes regarding the new information to help learners engage and participate more effectively.
- Provide scaffolding resources to help learners to manage and develop their response to the challenge in their inter-institutional teams. These could include templates to set the short-medium- and final goal of the challenge. Resources to scaffold development of ideas and templates to outline the content of the final video will help learners remain focused and visualise the final output.

Provide formative feedback opportunities to support learning development at different stages of the challenge. For example, giving feedback on development of societal issue to address in the challenge, providing feedback on the research action plan, providing feedback on outline of the solution proposed by the team of learners.

## Appendix 11: TRIP IVSC Challenge-based Feedback Form



Thank you for taking part in the piloting of the TRIP Project Intercultural Virtual Societal Challenge. We would appreciate your feedback in the following areas.

### 1. Your role in the IVSC Piloting

- Institutional Partner Coordinator
- Teamcher
- Mentor
- Student

### 2. Your home institution

### 3. Language(s) used for the IVSC

### 4. Your native language

### 5. Training Provided

Please consider the quality of training provided to IVSC participants.

	Poor	Fairly good	Good	Very good	Excellent
For teamchers/ mentors	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
For learners	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## 6. Suggestions for Teamcher/Mentor Training

Please provide suggestions on how the training for teamchers and mentors might be improved.

## 7. Suggestions for Learner Training

Please provide suggestions on how the training for learners might be improved.

## 8. Accessibility of Language

	Poor	Fairly good	Good	Very good	Excellent
Accessibility of language for the target group	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## 9. Relevance of content in relation to learning outcomes

Please consider the suitability and relevance of the thematic content areas and provided materials and resources for the target learner groups.

	Poor	Fairly good	Good	Very good	Excellent
Thematic materials	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Intercultural materials	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Digital materials	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### 10. Suggestions for Thematic Materials

Please provide suggestions on how the thematic materials can be improved.

### 11. Suggestions for Intercultural Materials

Please provide suggestions on how the intercultural materials can be improved.

### 12. Suggestions for Digital Materials

Please provide suggestions on how the digital materials can be improved.

### 13. Timetable and Scheduling

Please consider the logistics and organisation of the IVSC E-MODULE.

	Poor	Fairly good	Good	Very good	Excellent
Timetable and scheduling	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

#### 14. Timetable and Scheduling Suggestions

Please provide suggestions for how the timetable and scheduling of the IVSC E-MODULE can be improved.

#### 15. Delivery Format

Please consider the delivery format of the IVSC E-MODULE.

	Poor	Fairly good	Good	Very good	Excellent
Delivery format	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

#### 16. Delivery Format Suggestions

Please provide suggestions for how the delivery format of the IVSC E-MODULE can be improved.

#### 17. Inter-institutional Collaboration

Please consider the collaboration between IVSC team members at all involved institutions.

	Poor	Fairly good	Good	Very good	Excellent
Between coordinators	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Between teamchairs/ mentors	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Between teamchairs/learners	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Between learners	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## **18. Inter-institutional Collaboration Suggestions**

Please provide any suggestions on how the inter-institutional collaboration between all participants might be improved.

## **19. Benefits**

Please outline how you feel you benefited from engaging in the IVSC.

## **20. Challenges**

Please outline the challenges you experienced while engaging in the IVSC and where relevant, give details of how they were addressed/might be addressed in the future.

## **21. Additional Comments**

Please provide any additional comments to help improve the TRIP IVSC E-MODULE.

## Appendix 12: VEC Pilot 1 Survey

1. Start language
2. University/institution
3. What was your role? What was your role? [Comment]
4. In which edition did you participate? In which edition did you participate? [Comment]
5. In the past, I already participated in a collaborative, international, university learning project.
  
6. I have already supervised a team of learners.
7. In your course, what subjects are you studying?
8. Do you think that the VEC/DEV project has helped you to professionalise as a language teacher i.e. you gained experience, transferable skills, etc?
9. Do you think that the VEC/DEV project has helped you to professionalise as a language teacher i.e. you gained experience, transferable skills, etc? [Comment]
10. Has the project professionalised you in other ways? Explain: [Comment] Has the project professionalised you in other ways? Explain: [Comment]
11. You received mentoring as part of this project from teamchairs; can you tell us about your mentoring experience? Values: 0 negative, 1 neutral, 2 positive.
12. You received mentoring as part of this project from teachers, researchers, and M2 students; can you tell us about your mentoring experience? Values: 0 negative, 1 neutral, 2 positive.
13. Has the mentoring experience helped you to professionalise at a greater rate than you would have in another kind of university class? [Comment]. Has the mentoring experience helped you to professionalise at a greater rate than you would have in another kind of university class? [Comment]
14. To what extent do you think the students in your participant team have gained confidence in their second language through the experience of the challenge? Explain: Values: 1 Not all – 5 Very much so [Comment]. To what extent do you think the students in your participant team have gained confidence in their second language through the experience of the challenge? Explain. Values: 1 Not all – 5 Very much so [Comment].
15. In your opinion, did working with methodologies such as Project-based learning and Challenge-based learning enhance your own learning experience and the learning experience of your participant teams/students? Explain: [Comment]. In your opinion, did working with methodologies such as Project-based learning and Challenge-based learning enhance your own learning experience and the learning experience of your participant teams/students? Explain: [Comment]

16. Do you think that the VEC/DEV project has helped you to professionalise i.e. gained experience, transferable skills, etc. that you can use in the workplace? [Comment] Do you think that the VEC/DEV project has helped you to professionalise i.e. gained experience, transferable skills, etc. that you can use in the workplace? [Comment]
17. Do you think that students from your university professionalised - gained workplace skills, language skills, etc. - by taking part in this project? Explain: Do you think that students from your university professionalised - gained workplace skills, language skills, etc. - by taking part in this project? Explain: [Comment]
18. Do you consider yourself as someone concerned with ecology? Explain. What environmental issue concerns you most? [Comment].
19. Did you have environmentally friendly habits before the challenge? If yes, what habits? [Comment]
20. Did the project affect your interest in the environment? Explain. Values: 1 Not all – 5 Very much so [Comment].
21. Did you learn anything new about ecology from this project? Explain. [Comment]
22. Did the project give you the opportunity to research local environmental initiatives and projects? Explain. Values: 1 Not all – 5 Very much so [Comment].
23. Are you interested in developing your own local initiative in the future? Explain. Values: 1 Not all – 5 Very much so [Comment].
24. The educational objectives of the project were clearly stated. I found the documents that were provided to me to be satisfactory i.e. project information, educational resources, etc. Overall, I had a satisfactory workload.
25. I estimate that I worked a total of: Values: 10 hours: 1, 20 hours: 2, 30 hours: 3 (and so on). I estimate that I worked a total of: [Comment]
26. Did you attend this course: [Comment]
27. I enjoyed working with teacher-researchers and other staff involved in the project. Explain: [Comment]
28. Did you work in a team? [Comment]
29. I prefer to communicate by: [Comment]
30. Have you any feedback on the use of a 'virtual' format for language teaching and learning? [Comment]
31. I enjoyed working in a team. Values: 1 Not all – 5 Yes.
32. I interacted regularly with members of my team. Values: 1 Not all – 5 Regularly.
33. The division of labour between the team members was balanced. Values: 1 Not all – 5 Very much so.



34. The number of meetings between my team members was: Values: 1 Not satisfactory – 5. Satisfactory.
35. Percentage of my total contribution to the team: [Comment]
36. During the project, a member of my team gave up. if yes, why? [Comment]
37. Were constraints placed on how teams were formed? How did this affect you? [Comment]
38. Did you work in a team with friends? Explain [Comment]
- a) You answered that you did not work with a group of friends. However, did you have the dynamics of friendship within your team? [Comment]
  - b) In your team, were there people who were 'best friends'? Did this affect the dynamics of the team? [Comment]
39. I have gained new knowledge by participating in this project. Explain [Comment]
40. What activities did you enjoy the most? [Comment]
41. I feel capable at the end of this activity to: [Comment]
42. What helped and supported your learning? [Comment]
43. I developed cultural skills. Explain [Comment]. I developed language skills. I developed oral skills (i.e. engaged in presentations and debates). Explain [Comment]. I developed project management skills. Explain [Comment]. I developed collaboration skills. Explain [Comment]. I have developed rhetorical skills. Explain [Comment]. I have developed or improved my digital technology skills Explain [Comment]. I developed other skills. Explain [Comment]. What digital tools have you used to work in a team and to meet the challenges? Explain [Comment].
44. Did your teamcher recommend digital tools? What digital tools? Explain [Comment].
45. Did your mentor or teacher recommend digital tools? What digital tools? Explain [Comment].
46. I found the digital tools easy to use. I enjoyed being taught and guided by my teamcher. Values: 0 negative, 1 neutral, 2 positive. Explain [Comment].

## **Appendix 13: List of Case Studies**

### ***Case-study No. 1: Viktória, IVSC Teamcher, Matej Bel University***

Studying at university brings diverse opportunities. It not only allows you to get to grips with scholarly work but also to discover new ways of learning. Some of these have been designed to allow students to combine study, elements of scientific research, international collaboration and work (service) to the community of which they are a part. As I was interested in doing more than just attending lectures and compulsory seminars at the university from the beginning of my studies, I got involved in an IVSC activity that my university (*Matej Bel University*) was running jointly with the Université Rennes 2 in France in the five-week English version on the theme of the environment. So, in 2022, I became part of a 5-member student team. We created a small community garden at the Faculty of Arts at UMB, which was a great success.

Having participated in IVSC/VEC in 2022, I accepted the role of a teamcher for the IVSC activity one year later. As a teacher trainee, I found it a good way to enhance my experience with innovative methods. My task consisted of handing over some of my experience to new IVSC members, and my younger fellow students. It was again a new way of working and a new perspective for me. I tried to present my experience to my younger classmates objectively, pointing out the positive and negative aspects and preparing them in advance for possible difficulties. In the end, my classmates created an interesting project on the attitudes and barriers to waste separation in the UMB student house.

Virtual experience can hardly replace lab work, study tours, interactive workshops, experiential learning programmes, etc. More generally, any kind of group work cannot move into the virtual mode without losing a critical cognitive dimension. In conducting IVSC, we have tried to keep this problem in mind and supplement each stage of our work with critical self-reflection and interim and final evaluation together in a group under the guidance of the educators.

Working on piloting challenge-based learning was the first step for me to engage in further research activities at the faculty. These were later oriented towards basic research in linguistics and media. Through challenge-based learning, however, I was specially reinforced in my conviction that the goal of research is not just to produce new knowledge *per se*, but more importantly to find solutions to real problems.

### ***Case-study No. 2: Gabriel, Student, Matej Bel University***

I took part in this project as a foreign language student in charge of developing an eco-friendly improvement for our university campus. My team companions and I were mentored by the students from the Rennes 2 University in France.

Our project contemplated the installation of a vertical garden inside the campus facilities. Our attention was focused on giving utility to the university's courtyard, in desperate need of shaded spaces. The vertical garden was designed to incorporate native plant species to the Iberian Peninsula, most of them drought-resistant, accompanied by foreign species with beneficial effects on the garden's health. Given that we are humanities students, it was our goal to create a space for book reading and exchange alongside the garden.

It was a formative experience for us, as we had very few interactions with native French speakers previously. Our cultural development was mainly focused on improving language skills, mostly related to communication and vocabulary, and getting in touch with French environmentalist culture. For us, it was shocking at first to realize how much importance French people gave to biological and local foods. Along the same lines, we discovered the difficulties of public transportation in the USA.

Our digital skills developed in two areas: new software and communication. We learned at the same time to edit interesting slides and videos with programs such as Canva or PechaKucha and to host online presentations, improving our ways of speech delivery and administration of online meetings. It was difficult at first to improve our French proficiency to communicate properly. Aside from that, our tutors were extremely supportive and motivated us to keep up with the deadlines, creating a work dynamic that was challenging but enjoyable at the same time.

Overall, participating in this intercultural project has been one of the most unique experiences. One year later, my team companions and I still reflect on it positively. We have put the skills we learned into practice. It was a very comprehensive experience that combined aspects that we were familiar with, like language learning and environmentalism with new elements such as international mentoring.

***Case-study No. 4: Johann, IVSC Coordinator, Europa-Universität Flensburg***

At EUF the coordinator and teamcher worked closely together to get the IVSC started. The coordinator coordinates the complete TRIP project and consequently has an overview of participants in the different project results. The teamcher is in the English department and then identified that the course should be based and also accessed via the international office and the language departments. The students, as mentioned, were from different faculties and studied a range of programmes at different levels, from bachelor to doctoral level.

The group researching the environment theme was very independent and happy to work with the citations and intensify the issues without needing much support from the materials. They invested a lot of work in the primary data collection, namely surveys and interviews. Two of the participating students were at master's and PhD levels.

The gender and race groups did not start to work independently although some personal input was given by the students, but the project development was kept on the surface of the topics discussed. Though the students did participate actively, there was not much independent critical reflection. The students are all enrolled at BA level and they all attended the back-to-back sessions of both topics (Mondays 10:00-12:00 and 12:00-14:00), in combination with the detailed input given during the sessions this did not encourage engagement.

On reflection, I suggest that:

- The material of all groups could be improved by representing new research;
- Allow for more sessions to cover all the material;
- A block session in the middle may allow for a longer discussion or exchange- it could be in the format of a round table discussion or a showcasing event;
- Use the material to develop a position, encourage critical thinking and expand the scope of the analysis, i.e. add tasks: position papers, etc.

In relation to the thematic content, the environment group material came directly from one IVSC colleague. Not much input was needed as the group was very motivated and brought in a lot of aspects themselves. Turning to the gender group, one EUF IVSC colleague created some input in the form of a presentation on gender identity. Overall the material concentrates on classical binary topics such as the gender pay gap and debates on trans identities. The final group on the theme of race sourced interesting material which emphasised critical whiteness. Some topics lacked critical assessment, such as DNA testing as a means to scrutinize one's origins. Overall, the material is very Eurocentric. It needs to focus more on diversity and colourism, for example, the Southeast Asian context was not represented, as were many other aspects beyond Western society.

Digital skills development was needed as the groups were very diverse in their ability to engage with their digital skills. The diverse competencies of the students could be further developed at the start of the sessions to ensure time is set aside specifically to equip the students with skills to be able to engage with the course. Intercultural skills development on all levels is biased, with a need to have a global rather than a Western perspective.

Turning to challenge-based learning as a method, which demands more time, the incentive for students to partake in courses that are not embedded in their own modules is a challenge. Embedding new methods needs to consider the structure of courses, the output that must be met according to the modules and the administrative domino effect of change is often underestimated. Challenge-based learning offers the chance to engage with transformations in our societies and this can be connected to the university's third mission.

In summary, the pilot phase showed how important it was to have a preliminary delivery as it allowed for the identification of challenges in the process. The method and interpersonal communication, acquisition and implementation will vary from discipline and faculty which impacts the ability of all to participate. The need for increased resources, both in terms of time and personnel resources, is pertinent to the successful turnover of such a project.

***Case-study No. 5: María, Student, Universidad Complutense de Madrid***

I am currently a PhD student in literary studies at UCM and I decided to participate in the IVSC as a student because of my interest in the environment. My thesis focuses on ecocriticism, a theory that studies the relationship between literature and the environment, so when I learned that the challenge included a module on environmental issues, I did not hesitate to sign up. The personal growth I experienced during the challenge motivated me to participate again, the second time in the race. With the previous experience, I felt confident that I could take on more leadership. I enjoyed participating in this challenge because, although it involves a considerable commitment in terms of time to connect to the sessions and especially to think and design the action proposal and the video, I believe that all this helped me to become more aware of my time and task management. It is certainly worth a try, as every action counts to move towards a fairer and happier world.

In relation to the theme, I participated in the challenge twice, firstly on the environment and secondly on the theme of race. The thematic content in each was different, but both were quite comprehensive. Within the theme of the environment, the objective of the content was to develop a sense of responsibility and commitment to protect the environment and adopt sustainable practices. Turning to the theme of race, the content was aimed at finding creative solutions to the problem of racism and the system of privilege. I think the level is adequate, especially for those who have not yet approached these issues.

Intercultural skills development feature greatly in the IVSC. I consider this one of the greatest strengths of the challenge and created an opportunity to interact with students from other countries, who have different university experiences and at the same time complement mine because we share a common interest, to improve our environment. The intercultural skills I developed mainly focused on enhanced intercultural understanding and communication skills, even more so in the target language that is not my native language. The experience was enriching because it urged me to apply my knowledge to a concrete project. I always felt motivated by the teamchers, and the result we shared with the participants of other modules was gratifying.

Being in different parts of the world, our communication was in the virtual sphere. Throughout working on this project we utilized many digital tools to develop our project outputs such as iMovie, Jamboard and Looka. We also shared our progress in real time through OneDrive. I consider that this challenge worked well to strengthen our confidence in using digital media to design a project output with people around the world.

Turning to challenge-based learning, I have always thought that learning based on challenges, can show the best of ourselves, because you decide for yourself how much to get involved, and how much to investigate, of course the challenge has its basic criteria defined, but it is a personal and group decision to what extent to take it. One of the positive aspects I learned during the challenge is that no matter how much of my day-to-day I dedicate to my personal and professional activities, there is always room to develop an idea that improves our immediate environment, in managing time well is the challenge.

In summary, participating in IVSC requires a time commitment, but I believe that the personal result is satisfactory because of the knowledge you take away from the contents taught, the development of intercultural skills, especially communication skills in my case, feeling more confident using digital tools and for being a challenge for yourself. I consider that its strong point is the intercultural experience and for this, it must be ensured that there are participants from at least each of the universities.

***Case-study No. 7: Claus, Coordinator, Europa-Universität Flensburg***

In the role of institutional coordinator, I focussed on keeping an overview and preparing and planning the next steps prior to the start of the impending process, but also during an ongoing process of the IVSC. Communication was by and large through email and a virtual space that we use to share documents. Crucial here is always the question if information is up to date. The shared virtual space has proven to have an advantage over emails because communication by email can have time delays, due to external obligations thus, several communicative loops were necessary.

In relation to the thematic content, preparation and accompanying documents are the same for all thematic foci, thus from my roles' perspective I do not differentiate the thematic threads. Our HEI offered the IVSC as a stand-alone version, i.e. interested students from any study course were welcome to participate. ECTS gained here are not necessarily relevant for students' records there are advantages and disadvantages to this. The disadvantage is that it has a possible negative effect on student's motivation to participate in activities like the IVSC. The possible advantages include that those students who do choose the IVSC are choosing it based on a genuine interest in the format and the contents. This intrinsic motivation can contribute to a deeper and broader development of the thematic content.

Turning to intercultural skills development, preparing and escorting the IVSC at the EUF enhanced my communication skills. Intercultural development was in terms of content and how the content was communicated. This necessitated and included that each participant learnt not only about the theme in other cultures but also the recognition of each culture's means of dealing with the theme – for example, where some cultures may take certain aspects of a theme for granted and then discover that these particular aspects are not yet addressed in other cultures. Thus, demanding that each participant, regardless of their role, reflects on all aspects of the themes, thereby deepening and strengthening the narrative and how the narrative is adaptable in the local and international HEI context is one of my key findings. Critical to this is also a common understanding to ensure that the communication was based on a common understanding in order to quickly identify and clarify any misunderstandings.

As an institutional coordinator, I had to upskill digitally to learn the basics of video editing and be prepared to play different video formats. The moderation of the final session included a quick back and forth in video conferencing and screensharing. My observation is, that students tend to be well-prepared when it comes to video screening. Technical issues like dysfunctional audio settings have an enormous effect in virtual conferences, in particular when the main aim is to ensure that all participants are kept on board.

As this project was centred around challenge-based learning, student groups performed the steps foreseen in the process of the learning challenge and presented all three elements (logo, report, video) at the final session. This was the main aim of the project and the output presented by the students in the sessions showed how successful the project was: videos, as a format, on themes that are amongst the SDGs were addressed and presented in a cohesive manner. The results show the extent of time, effort and knowledge invested and how the content reflects the issues that need addressing at a societal level. The point being that it reflects the relevance of the themes to the challenges facing society and that the format facilitated the students in a) deepening their knowledge on the themes, b) realising the relevance to issues that had to be addressed c) that the issues were addressed relevant to their contemporary wider

community and d) providing the students with a sense of how their engagement could address issues through how and not just what we learn.

Although the role of coordinator is not equivalent to that of teacher or mentor or student, through coordinating, observing and evaluating the coordinator could learn about this method and its relevance within academia and how this could be used to improve and increase the third mission. On a local level, the method was difficult because the application was not included in the curriculum, which is a core learning point from the intercultural academic partnerships, how different cultures structure their programmes, how they are regulated and how they can be regulated. It also showed how imperative it is to have representatives from the cultures and the cultures' institutes. The key outcome is communication: how do we communicate (digitally) and what – key to this are definitions and common understanding or learning about the differences of the respective culture's understanding.

#### ***Case-study No. 8: Felix, Teamcher, Europa-Universität Flensburg***

I was a teamcher for the second time for the IVSC. Unlike last semester, this time around I was just supervising the sessions on the themes of gender and inclusion. The other two themes (race and environment) were mentored by teamchers from our partner institution, Universidad Complutense de Madrid.

During our sessions, I led students from EUF and UCM on the main challenges regarding the themes of gender theory and inclusion. As I was only providing them with the basics regarding the aforementioned themes, those sessions were quite talk-heavy on my part and I encouraged them to research more specific details about their project themselves.

The intercultural aspect was very apparent in both groups since the gender group consisted of one student from Germany and the Spanish student was an international student from China, making it very diverse in nature. When going into more detail regarding gender roles for men and women, and other genders outside of the binary system, students respectfully shared and discussed their personal upbringings and how this had affected their perception of gender. In the group on inclusion, there was also a German and a Spanish student who discussed in-depth how the systems in Germany and Spain were different when it came to inclusive measures they noticed on their campus.

When it came to digital upskilling, the students all knew this aspect already so we skipped most of the



input. Also, since the time frame of only two hours per week was very tight, it was nearly impossible to thoroughly explore digital measures with the students.

Generally speaking, time was of the essence and made a lot of parts of the IVSC challenging but in a quite negative way because it felt we couldn't explore everything that we wanted to. Another challenge was the last-minute pull-out by the other university UMB and the lack of communication from their side. Thus, we had to plan so many things last minute which made the entire beginning of the IVSC very stressful. We tried our best to not let the students notice. Their challenges were already quite grand as it was. Specifically, the Gender group had a lot of difficulty with the timing of their project work while the group on Inclusion did way better. The latter were also in constant exchange via email with me, which also helped them to finish their project in time.

My final thoughts are very similar to those I shared last semester. It's nearly impossible for the students to finish everything in those five weeks and specifically all the input that is required by the TRIP project is too much for those two hours per week. It would be better if the time frame was longer so that the students can also manage their time within the semester better. Another thing that could be improved is the communication between institutions and how everything is planned.

***Case-study No. 9: Andreea, Student, Europa-Universität Flensburg***

I am one of the students that participated in the TRIP Project. I have attended and participated in all the scheduled sessions of the project. This year's theme was "Gender" and all that it entails. In the first session, we were given material that we have been able to use all along the Project. Each session had different objectives, but all of them focused on the main one, the creation of a video. Each group had to choose a problem and based on it continue with the project.

The TRIP Project is surely an intercultural experience since we have participated with students from up to five different universities and countries. Each of us have a different cultural background which has led to the development of a multicultural environment. Not only have we learned new things about the topic "Gender", but we have also used and developed our intercultural skills.

All the sessions have been online, using the Meet platform that we all knew, but we were surprised when we discovered how versatile it is not only for meetings but also for individual and group work outside the meetings. The real challenge was to maintain contact and develop the Project with people at such a great distance.

Challenge-based learning is a very good teaching technique. Not only do you face situations you have never been in before, but you also develop coping skills. It can be hard, but it is very effective and what you learn this way is hardly forgotten.

I believe that the TRIP Project is a fantastic opportunity to improve the language in which it is done (in this case German). You enhance your reaction speed, you build up your vocabulary, and you speak fluently and almost in a constant improvisation. It is a fantastic tool to help you improve many academic aspects.

***Case-study No. 10: Heidi, Teamcher, Europa-Universität Flensburg***

My main role in the IVSC project was to coordinate groups of students to reflect on a specific social problem and its solution. As a teamcher, I mainly explained some aspects of these social issues, giving them the opportunity to think about a conflict that exists in their community, and from there extrapolate that case to a more global level, within their university campus.

The thematic content I worked on for the French version of the IVSC was the environment. In this aspect, as I had worked on a previous edition of the project on the same topic, my knowledge of the agents that affect the environment has not been greatly increased. However, thanks to the input of some students on the climate awareness of their countries and their universities, I have been able to expand a little more on the variety of views that exist when it comes to this issue.

Fortunate to the diversity of backgrounds involved, communication and work have been richly enriched in these groups and all members' intercultural competencies have had a positive balance. Considering that French is not only a European language, but also necessary to properly apply our knowledge of the language and the culture in order to act and communicate our environmental issues.

As far as my digital skills are concerned, I have learned about the different applications necessary for the creation of material used in the challenge. Given that the level of technological knowledge does not need to be high, I do not think the development of this skill was significant for either me or the students.

Learning through the challenge has been fruitful, as participating in the IVSC has allowed me to learn how to manage a group of students, coordinate and correct their ideas, as well as their use of French. My French level has also improved of course, more in vocabulary perhaps. For all these reasons it is important to keep the project going, to encourage students to apply what they have learned in other aspects of their academic and daily lives, just like I have done since I first participated back in 2019.

***Case-study No. 11: Isabel, Student, Universidad Complutense de Madrid***

I am a student at UCM and this year I was delighted to have the opportunity to participate in the Trip Project. The main thematic content was based on gender roles, more specifically on children's toys and how they affect the formation of people's character, for example, why a boy plays with a car or a ball and why a girl plays with a doll and not the opposite. After all, we concluded that society plays a huge role when setting gender roles up. Parents should encourage their children to play with whatever they feel more comfortable with, regardless of the child's gender, a toy is a toy.

I found the development of intercultural competencies very interesting, as people from different countries had to work together to achieve a common goal, regardless of gender, country, and the society in which they live.

In terms of digital skills development, it has been very profitable. I have learned to do different digital things that I didn't know before. This would also fall under the category of challenge-based learning because it has been a challenge to learn how to do different things, such as how to put a voice to a video and so on.

My final thoughts have been very positive. Not only do you learn to work in a team with people from all over the world, but you also force yourself into speaking in a language that is not your mother tongue which gets you out of your comfort zone. Overall, it has been a very beneficial project.

***Case-study No. 12: Diego, Teamcher, Europa-Universität Flensburg***

Last year, I participated as a student in the TRIP project for German, which was a very positive and enriching learning experience. As a postgraduate student, I have had a unique opportunity to participate as a Teamcher, also focused on German. I shared this role with a colleague from another university, so there were two Teamchers in our group, which provided a broader perspective and a richer experience for the students.

The theme of the sessions revolved around gender and queer studies. Due to the broadness of the topic, each week was adapted according to the students' interests and chosen topics. For example, we debated feminist theory, gender identity theories, and sexual diversity, ensuring that each session was engaging and relevant to the participants.

Turning to intercultural skills development, having each Teamcher from a different university (I from Spain, my co-Teamcher from Ireland) was very beneficial. We complemented each other well in advising the work groups and learned a lot from each other. Although student participation varied weekly, having four countries involved (Spain, Ireland, France, and Slovakia) was very beneficial for developing intercultural skills. The proposed research topics for the final projects were innovative and of great interest to the entire class.

The development of digital skills was one of the weakest points. Students did not use many tools beyond Padlet, and few used it for the presentation video or to generate the logo. The final videos were recorded traditionally: a PowerPoint presentation with a voice-over, which limited the students' exposure to more advanced digital tools and techniques.

The challenge-based learning method was effective. However, I recommend better planning for future courses, as one university joined after the project had started. Deadlines for each phase (group formation, logo creation, topic proposals, etc.) would help, as new students joined until the fourth week, and some did not have a working topic. Nonetheless, the final projects reflected good learning outcomes and showed significant effort from the students.

Participating as a Teamcher has been a rewarding experience, though improvements are needed for future editions. Organizational aspects should be defined earlier for better session utilization. Additionally, introducing more appealing digital tools could allow students to focus on recording videos or fostering creativity and academic research, such as learning to cite bibliographic references correctly.

### ***Case-study No. 13: Gabriela, Student, Universidad Complutense de Madrid***

The TRIP Project at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid (and the other European partner universities of the project) aims to foster international collaboration and enhance educational experiences through technology and intercultural exchange. The Teamcher participated in the IVSC framework as a mediator between the different student groups that worked together. Our role involved working on a cross-cultural project that brought together students from diverse backgrounds to tackle real-world problems. This collaboration required us to navigate various cultural perspectives and utilize digital tools to achieve our project goals.

Our project focused on the theme of gender issues, exploring topics such as gender equality, gender stereotypes, and the impact of gender norms on education and employment. We conducted in-depth research on how different cultures perceive gender roles and the progress made towards gender equality in various regions. This thematic content required us to engage with a wide range of sources, critically analysed gender policies, and understand the social and economic implications of gender disparities.

The TRIP Project was pivotal in enhancing our intercultural skills. Collaborating with peers from diverse cultural backgrounds allowed us to understand different perspectives on gender issues. We learned to navigate cultural differences and address sensitive topics with respect and empathy. This experience improved our ability to work in international teams, communicate effectively across cultures, and appreciate the diverse ways in which gender issues are understood and addressed globally.

Our project relied extensively on digital tools for communication, collaboration, and research. We became adept at using platforms such as Canva, Microsoft Teams, Kahoot and collaborative software like Trello and Google Workspace. These tools enabled us to hold virtual meetings, share documents, and coordinate tasks efficiently. We also developed skills in digital research, utilizing online databases and digital libraries to gather relevant information. This experience underscored the importance of digital literacy in today's academic and professional environments.

The challenge-based learning approach of the TRIP Project required us to identify real-world gender issues, propose innovative solutions, and implement them within the scope of our project. This methodology honed our problem-solving skills, encouraged creative thinking, and taught us to work effectively under pressure. By addressing complex gender issues, we developed resilience and the ability to view challenges as opportunities for growth and innovation.

Overall, participating in the TRIP Project was a transformative experience that significantly broadened our academic and professional horizons. Addressing the topic of gender in an international, interdisciplinary setting allowed us to develop crucial intercultural and digital skills. The challenge-based learning framework not only enhanced our problem-solving abilities but also fostered a deeper understanding of global gender issues. This experience has prepared us to engage thoughtfully and effectively with gender challenges in an increasingly interconnected world, equipping us with the skills and perspectives necessary to make meaningful contributions to gender equality.

*Case-study No. 14: Anita, Coordinator, University of Limerick (Ireland)*

I am involved in the development of the PR1 and PR2 components of the TRIP project and I am teaching German as a foreign language to first-year students. In collaboration with colleagues from Spain and France, we decided that we wanted to implement the IVSC in our German classes. I took over the role of the coordinator of the German IVSC as well as the mentor. This included the organisation of meetings with the other institutions, recruitment of teamchairs and translation of the material to German or identifying suitable sources in German. We aimed for the 5-week model and due to the feedback of the teamchairs from the pilot in Autumn, we used week 5 for individual group feedback and week 6 for the presentation.

Our theme was focused on gender. My main problem was to find suitable reading material and videos about this topic that could be used by language learners. According to the reflections of the students, the IVSC significantly enhanced their awareness.

Intercultural skills development is an area I felt was neglected due to the limited time available. Nevertheless, the students' reflections highlighted the benefits of international groups and the challenges such as time zones or communication etiquette, which they had to overcome. Turning to digital upskilling, I was surprised about the limited digital skills of some of the students. It is necessary to provide them with even more basic instructional videos. I find the challenge-based approach highly beneficial and some of the results were remarkable. However, not all groups grasped the concept of creating a solution-oriented project.

A key takeaway is that the conditions of all students must be identical. For some of the students, it was not mandatory to join the workshops, which made it challenging for others to work with them. Furthermore, shortening the live sessions would increase the willingness of the students to participate. In terms of language proficiency, the good students felt that they did not learn anything and some weaker students struggled with the language level. It was also difficult for them to find sources in German that were suitable and contained a language level that was not too challenging. Finally, in order to ensure that the workload for the teamchairs is manageable, I would suggest having the presentations for the first two sessions made in advance.

***Case-study No. 15: Darrell, Teamchair, University of Limerick (Ireland)***

The IVSC – TRIP E Module was conducted over an 8-week period and consisted of 2 sessions per week. The partners involved in this iteration were the University of Limerick, Matej Bel University, Universidad Complutense de Madrid and the University of Tübingen. Each inter-university group involved learners and teamchairs. The learners comprised of a cohort of volunteer students from

undergraduate to post-graduate level and from varying cultural and ethnic backgrounds. They had to engage in intercultural communication in groups to investigate a topic with the broad theme of race and produce a project consisting of a 3-minute video and a 10-minute presentation. The model used in this project involved a challenge-based learning approach including research, reflection and technology to provide practical strategies for tackling issues on the theme of race and racism.

I was the lead teacher from the University of Limerick. Having worked in a range of educational settings in Ireland, Spain, The UAE, Japan and South Korea, internationalisation, and intercultural communication have been a major factor of my teaching career over the last decade. As one of the teachers, I helped to facilitate discussions on intercultural communication, provide digital upskilling sessions and create online forums for the learners to engage, investigate, and act on the project in inter-institutional meetings on Microsoft teams. Finding suitable meeting times for the students was one minor challenge when considering time zones between countries, Ramadan and other commitments. As this was a pilot scheme the learners of this project were all volunteers. There was a high level of dedication and diligence from the learners but some unfortunately had to leave the project due to commitment clashes and other workloads.

Considering that it was a learner-centred and student-led project, the quality and standard of the final project videos and presentations were something that the evaluation panel were pleasantly surprised by. Thankfully, the level of detail and creativity in the group projects were very surprising only for the high level of digital literacy of the students. It supports the notion of empowering the students through UDL and CBL-based models so that they have the responsibility and scope to produce high-quality projects. This is something that I as a teacher learned. To have faith and confidence in the digital skills and abilities of learners when challenged with real-world societal issues.

***Case-study No. 16: Hadjer, Teamcher, University of Limerick (Ireland)***

The TRIP IVSC project aimed to engage students in Challenge-based learning (CBL) while enhancing their intercultural and digital skills. The project represents an opportunity for the students to tackle societal challenges and contribute to positive change. The IVSC took place over the course of an 8-week period entirely online. The theme of 'RACE' was chosen as the central focus for this semester.

As an international PhD researcher specialising in intercultural communication in global workplaces at the University of Limerick, I understand the importance of fostering cross-cultural dialogue and collaboration. One of the most rewarding experiences as a teamcher was witnessing the students' progress in areas related to technical and digital skills e.g., Jamboard and video creation. The students demonstrated great creativity in using the different digital platforms in their final videos. In addition to the digital skills, it was very insightful to facilitate the students' discussions on the theme of 'Race' shaped by their individual contexts within a culturally aware environment. The students interacted with the different videos and case studies by discussing not only their personal experiences but also global issues and the ways race manifests in their respective countries.

Facilitating the intercultural upskilling was also an enriching experience considering that the students came from different backgrounds which contributed to their understanding of cultural differences and reflection on their own and each other's cultures. I was pleasantly surprised by the students' performance in the assessment and their productions incorporating what they have learnt throughout the IVSC. The students showcased their understanding of the theme of race in both specific and broad contexts.

Taking part in the IVSC module, I witnessed the power of the challenge-based approach and tailored input in promoting students' awareness and active engagement with equality, diversity, and inclusion. The assessment method, which included video presentations along with questions and answers, proved to be an effective inclusive approach. This allowed the students to reflect on their experiences and articulate their thoughts effectively. Looking ahead, the IVSC's positive impact on students' understanding of societal challenges and their ability to contribute to positive change suggests a promising future.

***Case-study No. 17: Sandra, Student, University of Limerick (Ireland)***

I come from a small village near Valencia, Spain and I first heard about the TRIP project during my Erasmus programme at the University of Limerick. I was delighted to have the opportunity to take part in an intercultural project on race, as I had always wanted to be more aware of the nuances and



challenges related to the theme of race, especially as a future primary school teacher specialising in physical education.

From my experience, I gained valuable insights into the prevalence of racial inequalities and the importance of understanding different cultures with a willingness to learn and not to judge. This inspired the theme for my project, *exploring racism against women in sports*, and emphasized the need for inclusive pedagogical approaches that embrace diversity and advocate for social justice.

Throughout the sessions, we were reminded that *we are all products of the historical narrative of "race"*, as our understanding of *race*, as well as the social constructions and associated prejudices that have been built up throughout history, have influenced how we perceive ourselves and others. This stance, coupled with the message *Racism Stops with Me*, served as a reminder of our collective responsibility to combat racism in all its forms.

Furthermore, my participation in the project highlighted how culture can influence the dynamics of communication. Despite encountering communication challenges within my project group and eventually working independently on the project, I had outstanding experiences with other participants. The online sessions we held allowed me to interact with people from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and beliefs, which fostered mutual empathy and respect, leading us to challenge ethnocentrism and avoid stereotypes. In this regard, it personally made me appreciate the value of intercultural dialogue in broadening our minds.

Overall, the TRIP project provided me with an environment for transformative learning that allowed me to grow not only academically, but also as a person. Participating in this project has reaffirmed the importance of fostering diverse and inclusive communities where every voice is heard and respected. Therefore, I conclude by encouraging everyone to participate in the project and by expressing my gratitude to my teamcher for making it possible for me.

***Case-study No. 18: Widyarini, Student, University of Limerick (Ireland)***

I am currently in my second year of pursuing an International Structured-PhD majoring in Literature at the University of Limerick in Ireland. I worked hard to earn a fully funded scholarship from my government, competing with other educators from the tertiary level in the Republic of Indonesia to study at UL. I am delighted to have gained more than a traditional PhD experience at UL. Not only did I learn

how to teach using English as the medium of interaction and learning, but UL also provided me with the opportunity to participate in one of the Erasmus+ programmes called the TRIP project. This project was a transformative experience for me as I worked with a group of people from different nationalities, cultures, and languages. I worked with three girls from different nations in Group 2 they are Lea Motošková, Kristína Kubicová, and Mareile Richter. This experience broadened my horizons and transformed me into a more adaptable and empathetic individual.

The TRIP project allowed the group members and me to realise that our language barrier, which mainly consisted of limited English vocabulary and our accent-heavy speech, made it challenging for people from different backgrounds to understand us. Digital skills were also a problem that had rarely been taken into consideration by us. First of all, language barrier was the most fundamental hurdle, given that none of the group members spoke English as their first language. This created communication issues and required more time to convey messages in group chats or pronounce difficult words. Even when we obtained the correct pronunciation by copying it from online dictionary resources, the accent remained a significant barrier that hindered our comprehension. The solution for the inability to pronounce specific English diction was to explain the difficult word longer or choose an easier synonym if available. This language barrier made us realise that we are indeed different from each other, and we learned that patience and understanding were the key to talking to people from different backgrounds. It led us to develop a deep respect for each other and an appreciation for different cultures. We dedicated time during online group meetings to learn about each other's cultures, including religious beliefs and practices. These challenges highlighted the importance of cross-cultural understanding and digital skills in today's globalised world.

The project not only taught us the importance of cross-cultural understanding and intercultural communication and the role of technology as an aid to communication and the spread of knowledge. Through the TRIP project, we also realised that we lacked digital skills. We were in our comfort zone, thinking that what we had was enough, and yet, by joining this project, we realised that we were left behind in this digital era. We did not even know how to make a simple video, and only one of us knew how to create a video but unfortunately, she could not continue this project. This showed that the majority of the members, including me, did not master basic skills in updated technology. The solution was to follow the tutorials delivered by the teamchens and develop them according to our capacity. For example, we learned about the PechaKucha video maker application and then tried to find a similar application that was more familiar to me. I tried to integrate my familiarity or comfort zone in using the Canva application and combined it with ideas we got from PechaKucha. Eventually, I was able to create a simple video and did a voice-over. Through perseverance and hard work, I eventually made it.

This TRIP project taught us that this world is indeed huge, and the diversity of people brings out the main issues, namely language and cultural barriers. This project made us realise that it is hard for people to understand us, and we must try harder to use more accessible language to communicate with people from different backgrounds. The TRIP project taught us a profound appreciation for diversity and a strong willingness to respect people from different backgrounds. We also learned new digital technology and could eventually transform racial issues into the shape of an accessible learning medium in the form of a simple video for a wider spectrum of ages. The video idea was developed based on a survey, our experience in the TRIP project, and through creative narration skills as a literature student. The video conveyed the message that we need to put aside stereotypes and prejudices by trying to get to know people from different backgrounds, which is why the video gave the title "The Story of Trip the Cookie". To make a didactic work, I tried to conceal the real meaning at first by making an analogy of a cookie instead of directly stating it is a story about a human being. I wanted to reach a wider range of audience; therefore, I generated an idea from a neutral item, a cookie, and also try to use an accessible language. The video aims to bring awareness to the issues of discrimination, prejudice, and racism in modern society. In the video, people are represented as cookies, with each cookie type representing a specific problem identified in a survey. For example, Muslims are depicted as covered cookies, dark chocolate chip cookies represent people of colour, brown sugar cookies represent those with brown skin, and all. The video motivates viewers to act against racism and support the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) number 10 to reduce inequality and number 16, which advocates for a peaceful world. The message is that every human being has the same inherent value, and we should respect each other.

***Case-study No. 19: Elena, Student, Matej Bel University (Slovakia)***

In the summer semester 2023/2024, as students of philology at Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica (Slovakia), we received an interesting opportunity to participate in the IVSC project, organized by Université Rennes 2 in collaboration with the University of Limerick and other partner universities. The students' task was to prepare a video on a current social challenge of their choice and to propose their own solution.

The activity was covered in the Syntax of French course. The final grade for this course is assigned based on a final written test and also based on a term paper in which we are asked to analyze a continuous text of 20 sentences. Usually, students choose these texts from the daily press or contemporary Francophone prose. This time, however, we have used texts for syntactic analysis that were produced because of our project assignment at IVSC. This was an advantage because the text we produced

together with the other students was close to us in topic, content and structure compared to the often very complex journalistic or literary texts.

Our project won the competition in the end. We addressed the topic of life on Earth, with a particular focus on vegetarianism as an alternative to traditional meat consumption and proposed how it could be put into practice on a university campus.

Attending the IVSC was an enriching and inspiring experience for all of us. Thanks to the preparation for the competition, we gained a comprehensive knowledge of sustainability, health and ethics in food production. At the same time, we acquired valuable skills in research, presentation, video production, graphic design and international collaboration. Winning the IVSC provided a unique opportunity to present the project to an international audience, share ideas and suggestions, and contribute to sustainability and environmental protection. Finally, our whole group was rewarded by our teachers with the opportunity to participate in a short mobility at the University Rennes 2 in the following academic year as part of the Erasmus+ blended intensive programme.

***Case-study No. 20: Natália, Teamcher, Matej Bel University (Slovakia)***

In the spring term 2024, UMB students participated, together with students, from the University of Limerick and Universidad Complutense de Madrid in an 8-week version of IVSC on the theme of race. Out of 32 Slovak students interested at the beginning, several kept up until the end and produced very innovative ideas to improve equality in campus life.

For teamchers involved, this IVSC pilot has been the most attractive and engaging. The reason is that teamchers from three countries were allowed to work in close synergy. A clear task distribution had been defined before the challenge started and the weekly online sessions with student participants were led by teamchers teams from three different countries. It has been a real co-teaching experience, new to many, and surely enriching for all.

Each teamcher was responsible for two weekly sessions. Following the joint structure, common to all the sessions, they had to prepare content and accompany students in particular tasks. UMB teamchers worked in tandem. First of the two sessions they oversaw facilitation of students' initial brainstorming to capture the 'big ideas' for the group projects. The other session ensured by UMB teamchers was dedicated to video making. Enhancing students' IT skills was an added value throughout the whole activity.

The two teamchairs from UMB had different profiles with different levels of multilingual competence and different level of experience in working internationally. They complimented one another in this new co-teaching format and are ready to share it with other colleagues at Matej Bel University and beyond.

## **Appendix 14: The VEC/IVSC Case Studies (samples)**

### **VEC Pilot 1**

#### ***Case-study No. 1: Viktória, IVSC Teamchair, Matej Bel University***

Studying at university brings diverse opportunities. It not only allows you to get to grips with scholarly work but also to discover new ways of learning. Some of these have been designed to allow students to combine study, elements of scientific research, international collaboration and work (service) to the community of which they are a part. As I was interested in doing more than just attending lectures and compulsory seminars at the university from the beginning of my studies, I got involved in an IVSC activity that my university (*Matej Bel University*) was running jointly with the Université Rennes 2 in France in the five-week English version on the theme of the environment. So, in 2022, I became part of a 5-member student team. We created a small community garden at the Faculty of Arts at UMB, which was a great success.

Having participated in IVSC/VEC in 2022, I accepted the role of a teamchair for the IVSC activity one year later. As a teacher trainee, I found it a good way to enhance my experience with innovative methods. My task consisted of handing over some of my experience to new IVSC members, and my younger fellow students. It was again a new way of working and a new perspective for me. I tried to present my experience to my younger classmates objectively, pointing out the positive and negative aspects and preparing them in advance for possible difficulties. In the end, my classmates created an interesting project on the attitudes and barriers to waste separation in the UMB student house.

Virtual experience can hardly replace lab work, study tours, interactive workshops, experiential learning programmes, etc. More generally, any kind of group work cannot move into the virtual mode without losing a critical cognitive dimension. In conducting IVSC, we have tried to keep this problem in mind and supplement each stage of our work with critical self-reflection and interim and final evaluation together in a group under the guidance of the educators.

Working on piloting challenge-based learning was the first step for me to engage in further research activities at the faculty. These were later oriented towards basic research in linguistics and media. Through challenge-based learning, however, I was specially reinforced in my conviction that the goal of research is not just to produce new knowledge *per se*, but more importantly to find solutions to real problems.

### ***Case-study No. 2: Gabriel, Student, Matej Bel University***

I took part in this project as a foreign language student in charge of developing an eco-friendly improvement for our university campus. My team companions and I were mentored by the students from the Rennes 2 University in France. Our project contemplated the installation of a vertical garden inside the campus facilities. Our attention was focused on giving utility to the university's courtyard, in desperate need of shaded spaces. The vertical garden was designed to incorporate native plant species to the Iberian Peninsula, most of them drought-resistant, accompanied by foreign species with beneficial effects on the garden's health. Given that we are humanities students, it was our goal to create a space for book reading and exchange alongside the garden.

It was a formative experience for us, as we had very few interactions with native French speakers previously. Our cultural development was mainly focused on improving language skills, mostly related to communication and vocabulary, and getting in touch with French environmentalist culture. For us, it was shocking at first to realize how much importance French people gave to biological and local foods. Along the same lines, we discovered the difficulties of public transportation in the USA.

Our digital skills developed in two areas: new software and communication. We learned at the same time to edit interesting slides and videos with programs such as Canva or PechaKucha and to host online presentations, improving our ways of speech delivery and administration of online meetings. It was difficult at first to improve our French proficiency to communicate properly. Aside from that, our tutors were extremely supportive and motivated us to keep up with the deadlines, creating a work dynamic that was challenging but enjoyable at the same time. Overall, participating in this intercultural project has been one of the most unique experiences. One year later, my team companions and I still reflect on it positively. We have put the skills we learned into practice. It was a very comprehensive experience that combined aspects that we were familiar with, like language learning and environmentalism with new elements such as international mentoring.

### **IVSC Pilot 2**

#### ***Case-study No. 3: Johann, IVSC Teamcher, Europa-Universität Flensburg***

At EUF the coordinator and teamcher worked closely together to get the IVSC started. The coordinator coordinates the complete TRIP project and consequently has an overview of participants in the different project results. The teamcher, based in the English department, identified that the course should be based and also accessed via the international office and the language departments. The students, as mentioned, were from different faculties and studied a range of programmes at different levels, from bachelor to doctoral level.

The group researching the environment theme was very independent and happy to work with the citations and intensify the issues without needing much support from the materials. They invested a lot of work in the primary data collection, namely surveys and interviews. Two of the participating students were at master's and PhD levels. The gender and race groups did not start to work independently although some personal input was given by the students, but the project development was kept on the surface of the topics discussed. Though the students did participate actively, there was not much independent critical reflection. The students are all enrolled at BA level and they all attended the back-to-back sessions of both topics (Mondays 10:00-12:00 and 12:00-14:00), in combination with the detailed input given during the sessions this did not encourage engagement.

On reflection, I suggest that:

- The material of all groups could be improved by representing new research;
- Allow for more sessions to cover all the material;
- A block session in the middle may allow for a longer discussion or exchange- it could be in the format of a round table discussion or a showcasing event;
- Use the material to develop a position, encourage critical thinking and expand the scope of the analysis, i.e. add tasks: position papers, etc.

In relation to the thematic content, the environment group material came directly from one IVSC colleague. Not much input was needed as the group was very motivated and brought in a lot of aspects themselves. Turning to the gender group, one EUF IVSC colleague created some input in the form of a presentation on gender identity. Overall the material concentrates on classical binary topics such as the gender pay gap and debates on trans identities. The final group on the theme of race sourced interesting material which emphasised critical whiteness. Some topics lacked critical assessment, such as DNA testing as a means to scrutinize one's origins. Overall, the material is very Eurocentric. It needs to focus more on diversity and colourism, for example, the Southeast Asian context was not represented, as were many other aspects beyond Western society.

Digital skills development was needed as the groups were very diverse in their ability to engage with their digital skills. The diverse competencies of the students could be further developed at the start of the sessions to ensure time is set aside specifically to equip the students with skills to be able to engage with the course. Intercultural skills development on all levels is biased, with a need to have a global rather than a Western perspective. Turning to challenge-based learning as a method, which demands more time, the incentive for students to partake in courses that are not embedded in their own modules is a challenge. Embedding new methods needs to consider the structure of courses, the output that must be met according to the modules and the administrative domino effect of change is often underestimated.

Challenge-based learning offers the chance to engage with transformations in our societies and this can be connected to the university's third mission.

In summary, the pilot phase showed how important it was to have a preliminary delivery as it allowed for the identification of challenges in the process. The method and interpersonal communication, acquisition and implementation will vary from discipline and faculty which impacts the ability of all to participate. The need for increased resources, both in terms of time and personnel resources, is pertinent to the successful turnover of such a project.

***Case-study No. 5: María, Student, Universidad Complutense de Madrid***

I am currently a PhD student in literary studies at UCM and I decided to participate in the IVSC as a student because of my interest in the environment. My thesis focuses on ecocriticism, a theory that studies the relationship between literature and the environment, so when I learned that the challenge included a module on environmental issues, I did not hesitate to sign up. The personal growth I experienced during the challenge motivated me to participate again, the second time in the race. With the previous experience, I felt confident that I could take on more leadership. I enjoyed participating in this challenge because, although it involves a considerable commitment in terms of time to connect to the sessions and especially to think and design the action proposal and the video, I believe that all this helped me to become more aware of my time and task management. It is certainly worth a try, as every action counts to move towards a fairer and happier world.

In relation to the theme, I participated in the challenge twice, firstly on the environment and secondly on the theme of race. The thematic content in each was different, but both were quite comprehensive. Within the theme of the environment, the objective of the content was to develop a sense of responsibility and commitment to protect the environment and adopt sustainable practices. Turning to the theme of race, the content was aimed at finding creative solutions to the problem of racism and the system of privilege. I think the level is adequate, especially for those who have not yet approached these issues.

Intercultural skills development feature greatly in the IVSC. I consider this one of the greatest strengths of the challenge and created an opportunity to interact with students from other countries, who have different university experiences and at the same time complement mine because we share a common interest, in improving our environment. The intercultural skills I developed mainly focused on enhanced intercultural understanding and communication skills, even more so in the target language that is not my native language. The experience was enriching because it urged me to apply my knowledge to a concrete project. I always felt motivated by the teamchers, and the results we shared with the participants



of other modules were gratifying. Being in different parts of the world, our communication was in the virtual sphere. Throughout working on this project we utilized many digital tools to develop our project outputs such as iMovie, Jamboard and Looka. We also shared our progress in real time through OneDrive. I consider that this challenge worked well to strengthen our confidence in using digital media to design a project output with people around the world.

Turning to challenge-based learning, I have always thought that learning based on challenges, can show the best of ourselves, because you decide for yourself how much to get involved, and how much to investigate, of course the challenge has its basic criteria defined, but it is a personal and group decision to what extent to take it. One of the positive aspects I learned during the challenge is that no matter how much of my day-to-day I dedicate to my personal and professional activities, there is always room to develop an idea that improves our immediate environment, in managing time well is the challenge. In summary, participating in IVSC requires a time commitment, but I believe that the personal result is satisfactory because of the knowledge you take away from the contents taught, the development of intercultural skills, especially communication skills in my case, feeling more confident using digital tools and for being a challenge for yourself. I consider that its strong point is the intercultural experience and for this, it must be ensured that there are participants from at least each of the universities.

### **IVSC Pilot 3**

#### ***Case-study No. 15: Darrell, IVSC Coordinator, University of Limerick***

The IVSC – TRIP E Module was conducted over an 8-week period and consisted of 2 sessions per week. The partners involved in this iteration were the University of Limerick, Matej Bel University, Universidad Complutense de Madrid and the University of Tlemcen. Each inter-university group involved learners and teamchers. The learners comprised of a cohort of volunteer students from undergraduate to post-graduate level and from varying cultural and ethnic backgrounds. They had to engage in intercultural communication in groups to investigate a topic with the broad theme of race and produce a project consisting of a 3-minute video and a 10-minute presentation. The model used in this project involved a challenge-based learning approach including research, reflection and technology to provide practical strategies for tackling issues on the theme of race and racism.

I was the lead teamcher from the University of Limerick. Having worked in a range of educational settings in Ireland, Spain, The UAE, Japan and South Korea, internationalisation, and intercultural communication have been a major factor of my teaching career over the last decade. As one of the teamchers, I helped to facilitate discussions on intercultural communication, provide digital upskilling sessions and create online forums for the learners to engage, investigate, and act on the project in inter-

institutional meetings on Microsoft Teams. Finding suitable meeting times for the students was one minor challenge when considering time zones between countries, Ramadan and other commitments. As this was a pilot scheme the learners of this project were all volunteers. There was a high level of dedication and diligence from the learners but some unfortunately had to leave the project due to commitment clashes and other workloads.

Considering that it was a learner-centred and student-led project, the quality and standard of the final project videos and presentations were something that the evaluation panel were pleasantly surprised by. Thankfully, the level of detail and creativity in the group projects were very surprising only for the high level of digital literacy of the students. It supports the notion of empowering the students through UDL and CBL-based models so that they have the responsibility and scope to produce high-quality projects. This is something that I as a teacher learned. To have faith and confidence in the digital skills and abilities of learners when challenged with real-world societal issues.

## Appendix 15: List of Resources

Intercultural Challenges in Virtual Teams:

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/315369349\\_Intercultural\\_Challenges\\_in\\_Virtual\\_Teams](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/315369349_Intercultural_Challenges_in_Virtual_Teams)

Hanesova, D., Theodoulides, L. 2022. Mastering Transversal Competences in A Higher Education Environment: through process of critical thinking and reflection. Open Access: DOI

<https://doi.org/10.24040/2022.9788055720159n> or <https://repo.umb.sk/handle/123456789/200>

Empirical Study on Intercultural Collaboration in Project Teams: Preliminary Research Findings:

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/323188684\\_Empirical\\_Study\\_on\\_Intercultural\\_Collaboration\\_in\\_Project\\_Teams\\_Preliminary\\_Research\\_Findings?\\_sg%5B0%5D=-ef5AxfxCVWxVlz68fiP8nBgv0ozNtl-btgfKy0Ma2hwonB8EeZqF3cf6HIixftaeMqUAapi38VxRHY.Q3Gs5dajYHXLjb2SP9sD9ahfSAqLRIL7AMxIXzGpdz22Lh4glh6E0FUpDVxSxuG2LuNK7jKIf8hSLDI6GSKx2Q&\\_sg%5B1%5D=X\\_QWZrifTWA KY91eUJciwD4vCz0C4IUuVIy4QJWLON1s0aoSxa9eOQyvBmflYEOPhIB4Mfufe0IH6Hbub1L82NX5vww.Q3Gs5dajYHXLjb2SP9sD9ahfSAqLRIL7AMxIXzGpdz22Lh4glh6E0FUpDVxSxuG2LuNK7jKIf8hSLDI6GSKx2Q&\\_sg%5B2%5D=G1VT0UD9Ab9sWXeK3eu4RzIPd9wJ1EIRnB-rzNX6DY3NgSKu6s3jrCf-ooSgJp8Ux8MIgIsaCw1EEEx90jw.Q3Gs5dajYHXLjb2SP9sD9ahfSAqLRIL7AMxIXzGpdz22Lh4glh6E0FUpDVxSxuG2LuNK7jKIf8hSLDI6GSKx2Q&\\_sgd%5Bsr%5D=1](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/323188684_Empirical_Study_on_Intercultural_Collaboration_in_Project_Teams_Preliminary_Research_Findings?_sg%5B0%5D=-ef5AxfxCVWxVlz68fiP8nBgv0ozNtl-btgfKy0Ma2hwonB8EeZqF3cf6HIixftaeMqUAapi38VxRHY.Q3Gs5dajYHXLjb2SP9sD9ahfSAqLRIL7AMxIXzGpdz22Lh4glh6E0FUpDVxSxuG2LuNK7jKIf8hSLDI6GSKx2Q&_sg%5B1%5D=X_QWZrifTWA KY91eUJciwD4vCz0C4IUuVIy4QJWLON1s0aoSxa9eOQyvBmflYEOPhIB4Mfufe0IH6Hbub1L82NX5vww.Q3Gs5dajYHXLjb2SP9sD9ahfSAqLRIL7AMxIXzGpdz22Lh4glh6E0FUpDVxSxuG2LuNK7jKIf8hSLDI6GSKx2Q&_sg%5B2%5D=G1VT0UD9Ab9sWXeK3eu4RzIPd9wJ1EIRnB-rzNX6DY3NgSKu6s3jrCf-ooSgJp8Ux8MIgIsaCw1EEEx90jw.Q3Gs5dajYHXLjb2SP9sD9ahfSAqLRIL7AMxIXzGpdz22Lh4glh6E0FUpDVxSxuG2LuNK7jKIf8hSLDI6GSKx2Q&_sgd%5Bsr%5D=1)

Video based resources: the website provide courses based on videos: Interesting topics

Relationship Theory in Interpersonal Communication: <https://study.com/learn/lesson/types-attraction-concept-examples-theory.html>

Communication in the Digital Age <https://study.com/academy/course/communications-106-communication-in-the-digital-age.html>

Communications 301: Diversity and Intercultural Communication: <https://study.com/academy/course/communications-301-diversity-and-intercultural-communication.html>