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# Fostering student engagement through problem-solving in multidisciplinary, transnational teams

Suzy McAnsh ([suzy.mcansh@oulu.fi](mailto:suzy.mcansh@oulu.fi)) and Eva Braidwood ([eva.braidwood@oulu.fi](mailto:eva.braidwood@oulu.fi))

University of Oulu, Finland



# Interaction and dialogue between cultures and language-learning communities: a long-term agenda

“In 2020, at least 20% of those graduating in the European Higher Education Area should have had a study or training period abroad”  
(Leuven and Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué, 2009, p.4)

“Promoting international student mobility (ISM) is one of the main objectives of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA)”  
(from Vögtle, 2019; reported in Gwośc et al., 2021, p 252)

Objectives for the internationalisation of higher education and research to be achieved by 2025: employment of international higher education students and staff, internationalisation skills, global responsibility and sustainable development  
(Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, 2022)

# But physical mobility brings disadvantages

€ High costs of moving abroad

 Loss of learnings from student job

 Separation from partner, children, social circles

 International students don't get to know locals

 Difference between study programme at home and host universities

 Recognition of credits

 Elitist and non-sustainable

 Risks to health and well-being

University of Oulu (2022):

- 13 800 students
- 617 incoming international students
- 371 outgoing international students (**c. 2.7%**)



# A new phase for internationalisation

(de Wit & Deca, 2020)

“Internationalization of higher education is entering a new phase. A shift from internationalization abroad with a strong focus on a small elite of mobile students, faculty, administrators and programs towards internationalization at home for all students, faculty and administrators is even more urgent than ever”.

# Introducing the EntreSTEAM project

Erasmus+ project (2020-22): supporting virtual exchange and collaborative online learning

**Entre**

focusing on cultivating an entrepreneurial mindset in our students

+

**STEAM**

exploiting advantages of collaboration between disciplines



# The EntreSTEAM project had three main goals



Increase virtual mobility of students and teachers



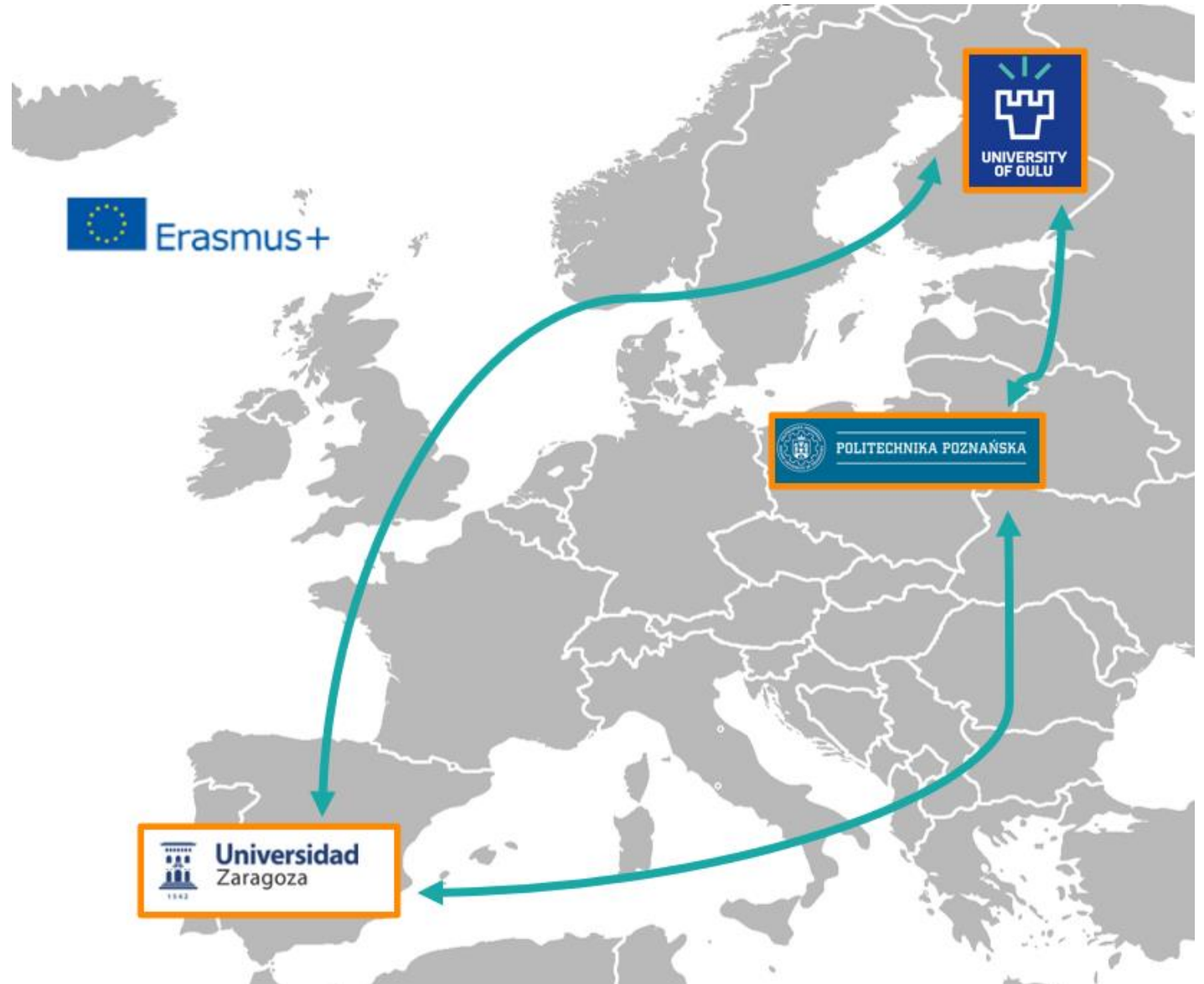
Strengthen students' entrepreneurial skills



Enhance the working life relevance of language courses.

# Project partners

- the University of Oulu, Finland (coordinator)
- the University of Zaragoza, Spain
- Poznan University of Technology, Poland.



# A product of EntreSTEAM:



# EnComTOP

## English Communication through Transnational Online Projects

Työpöytä / Omat kurssini / EnComTOP / Course schedule

Welcome to EnComTOP!

Team contact information

Course activities: overview

Course schedule

Pitch Forum

Team space

Pre-course activities

Introduction: Week 1

Mapping phase: Week 2

Defining phase: Week 3

Ideating phase: Week 4

Validating phase: Week 5

Prototyping phase: Weeks 6-7

Review phase: Week 8

Feedback

Teams of 4-5 students formulate a problem, design a solution using multidisciplinary strengths, and present their solution in a pitch.



# The EnComTOP course focuses on five areas

## Course structure:

A self-access package  
of supporting activities

up to 3 ECTS

Collaborative, transnational  
team project

2 ECTS



Certificate  
of completion

**Time-  
management  
training**

**Design-  
sprint  
training**

**Teamwork in  
transnational  
teams**

**Problem-  
forming  
training**

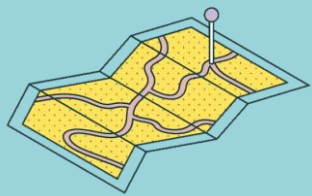
**Presentation  
-skills  
training**

# In the course, teams follow the design-sprint method

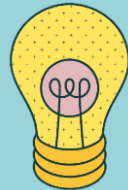


*(c) Jake Knapp, John Zeratsky & Braden Kowitz*

## THE DESIGN SPRINT PROCESS



MAPPING



DEFINING



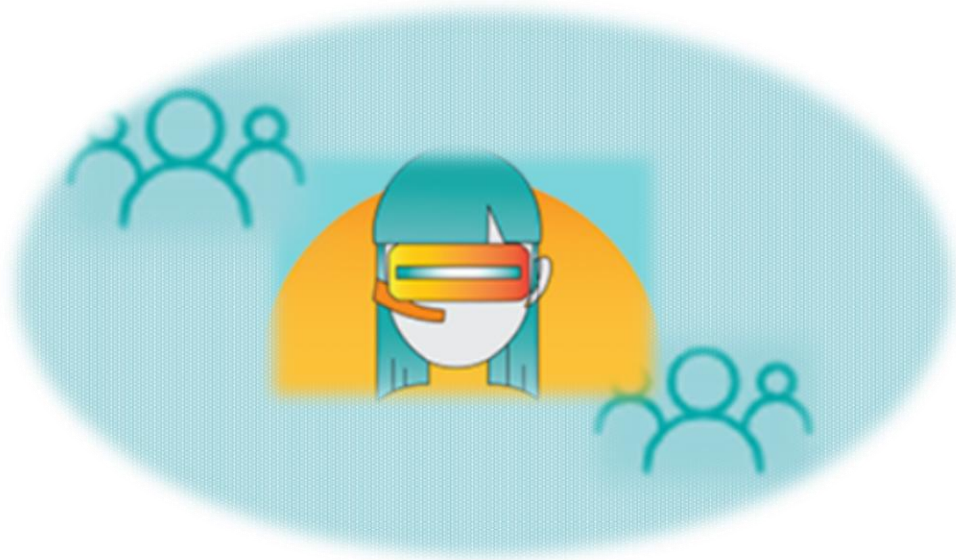
IDEATING



VALIDATING



PROTOTYPING



## Structure of the course

At each DS stage

- Essential individual activities
- Essential teamwork activities
- Helpful activities (further support)

Pre-module activities (1 week)

Introduction & webinar (1 week)

Mapping phase (1 week)

Defining phase (1 week)

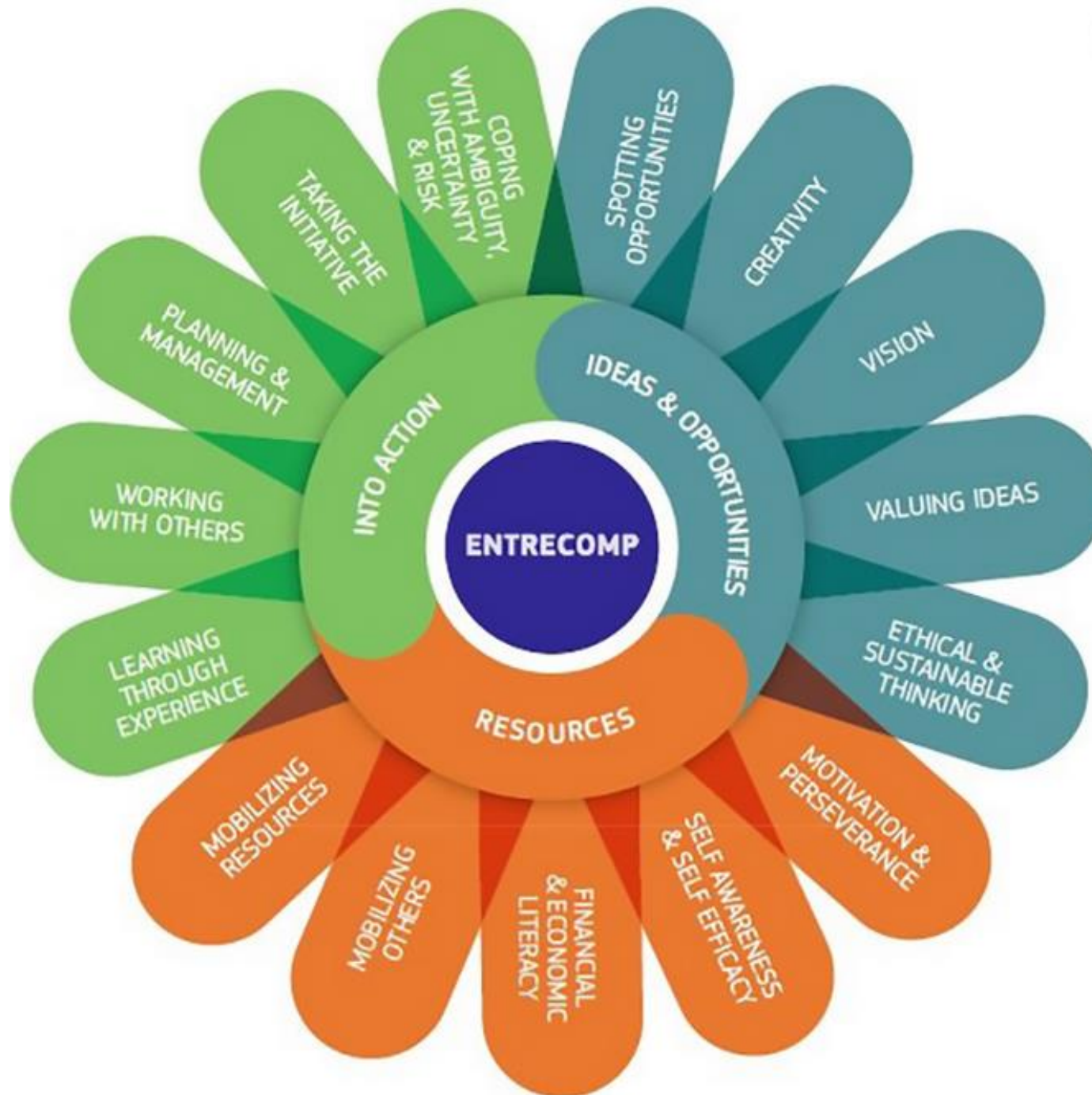
Ideating phase (1 week)

Validating phase (1 week)

Prototyping phase (2 weeks)

Review phase (1 week)

Feedback (2-4 days)



# Today's graduates need an entrepreneurial mindset & competencies

Entrepreneurship  
Competence Framework  
(Bacigalupo, M. et al., 2016)

# Practical implementation of EnComTOP course



Recruitment:

**Formal / institutional:** advertised at the University of Oulu and other cooperating universities

**Informal / through classroom contact:** teachers recommendation



Teams:

**Multinational:** 4-5 students

- multidisciplinary background
- matching English proficiency
- self-assessment of team-working abilities (pre-course task/survey)



Kick-off meeting:

**Webinar:** (first and only meeting with teachers)

- introducing course, online workspace and team members

**Aim:** induction to self-directed/team working experience

# Framing challenges within the context of the UN Sustainable Development Goals



# Outcomes

Cross-disciplinary perspectives

Cross-cultural enrichment

Activating agency

CEFR CV 2020

Modular building for temporary accommodation



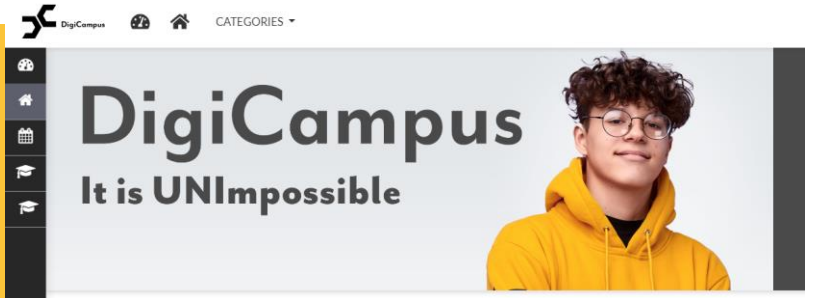
How might we encourage startups to follow the circular economy principles?

Circular economy competition:

- ▶ petition for the European parliament,
- ▶ plan how to implement circular economy principles,
- ▶ monetary prize,
- ▶ free advertising for winners

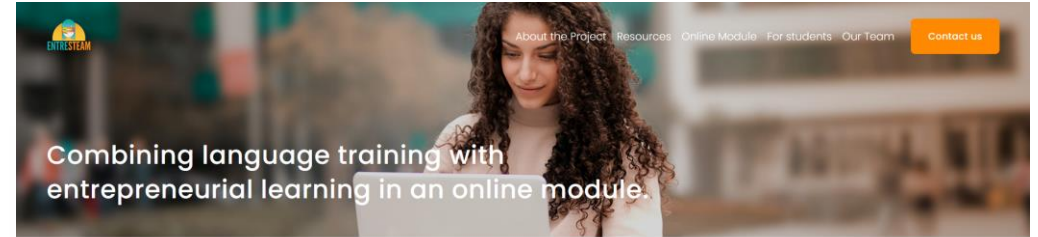


# EnComTOP is hosted in the DigiCampus workspace



1. Finnish HE project funded by the Ministry of Education and Culture (2018-2021)
  - Developing digital teaching skills of university teachers
  - LMS Moodle – open to users from all over the world
2. Provides a platform
  - for collaborative courses where the participants come from outside Finnish universities
  - for the EnComTOP course template
3. For free access
  - register at DigiCampus.fi <http://digiCampus.fi/>
  - from outside Finland, use Google registration





**EntreSTEAM project helps language educators to spice up their courses.**

[About the Project](#)

EntreSTEAM (2020-2022) is an Erasmus+ KA203 Strategic Partnerships funded project, that aims to help European Higher Education Institutes with improving working-life connection in their foreign language and communication courses.

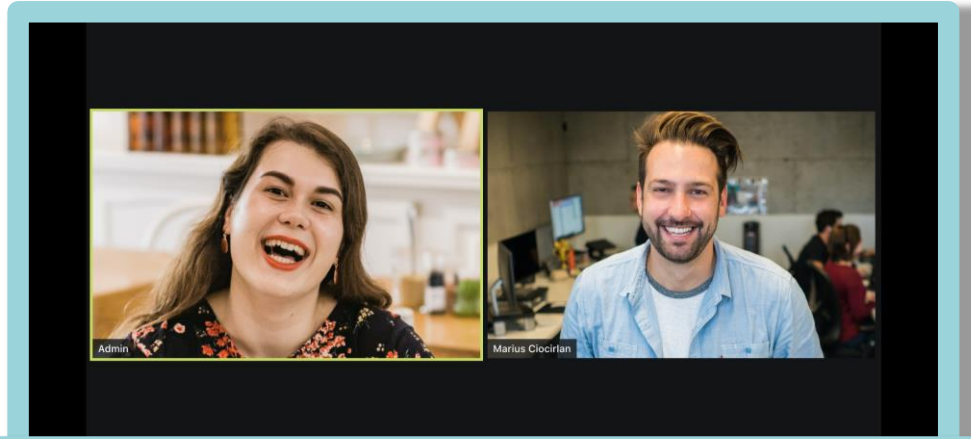
The project produces an online module combining language learning with entrepreneurially minded and problem based learning, resulting with students working in transnational teams focusing on solving current challenges through design thinking methods.

Our target audience is language teachers and educators across the

**Further details on the Entresteam website:**  
<https://www.entresteam.com/>

# Boosting IaH activities through digital mobility

- Alternative to travelling abroad
- Developing cultural awareness
- Diversity enriches problem-solving



# References

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