

Participatory Workshop on European Project Ideas

Integration of First-Year International and Non-Local Students

*Faculty of Medicine – Dental Medicine Programme
Dimitrie Cantemir University of Târgu Mureş*

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Academic Unit:	Faculty of Medicine – Dental Medicine Programme
Date:	Tuesday 26 May 2026, 10:00–12:00
Duration:	Maximum 2 hours
Target group:	Students, professors, researchers and/or staff from the Dental Medicine Programme
Final beneficiaries:	First-year students coming from outside Romania and from other cities or regions outside Târgu Mureş
Format:	Participatory workshop with short inputs, facilitated group work and collective prioritisation

1. General Objective

The workshop aims to support participants in identifying, discussing and co-creating innovative ideas for future European projects focused on the integration of first-year students who arrive at the university from outside Romania or from other cities and regions outside Târgu Mureş.

The session will use participatory facilitation techniques, including elements of autobiographical narrative, not as a therapeutic method, but as a way to explore students' real experiences, identify common challenges and transform them into concrete project proposals.

2. Specific Objectives

- Identify the main challenges faced by first-year international and non-local students.
- Explore the needs of students arriving from outside Romania and from outside Târgu Mureş.
- Create a collaborative space where students, professors and staff can reflect together on integration and inclusion.
- Use participatory facilitation methods to transform challenges into possible European project concepts.
- Generate concrete ideas for activities, support tools and cooperation projects.
- Identify one or more project ideas that could be further developed for European funding opportunities.

3. Proposed Thematic Focus

- Welcoming and orientation of first-year students.
- Integration of international students and students from other cities or regions.
- Academic adaptation during the first year of university.
- Intercultural dialogue and peer learning.
- Language barriers and communication difficulties.

- Emotional wellbeing, loneliness and sense of belonging.
- Mentoring systems between senior and first-year students.
- Student participation and community life.
- Inclusion of students with different cultural, social or geographical backgrounds.
- Cooperation between the university, the local community and student support services.
- Digital tools to support orientation, integration and access to information.

4. Methodological Approach

The workshop will be based on a participatory facilitation process. Participants will be actively involved through individual reflection, guided dialogue, small group work and collective prioritisation.

The facilitation approach will help participants move from general reflections to concrete project ideas. The workshop will combine a concise introduction to European project logic with practical exercises designed to identify needs, generate ideas and structure them into preliminary project concepts.

4.1 Autobiographical Narrative as a Participatory Tool

Autobiographical narrative will be used as a structured participatory and educational tool to help participants reflect on arrival, adaptation, belonging, barriers, support networks and possible solutions for improving the first-year student experience.

This approach will not be used as therapy, nor as a space for personal disclosure beyond what participants freely wish to share. Instead, autobiographical narrative will be used in a respectful way to identify common issues, understand different perspectives and transform lived experiences into possible project ideas.

Through guided storytelling, visual mapping and group reflection, participants may explore questions such as: What difficulties do students face when they arrive in a new city or country? What helps them feel welcomed? What makes them feel isolated or excluded? What support systems could improve their first-year experience?

5. Proposed Agenda

Total duration: Maximum 2 hours / 120 minutes

Time	Activity	Duration	Facilitation Method
00:00 – 00:10	Welcome and participatory opening	10 min	Opening circle / quick check-in
00:10 – 00:25	Short introduction to European project logic	15 min	Interactive presentation
00:25 – 00:50	Exploring the first-year student journey	25 min	Autobiographical narrative / empathy mapping / collective reflection
00:50 – 01:15	From challenges to project ideas	25 min	Brainstorming / small group work
01:15 – 01:40	Project Idea Canvas	25 min	Co-design template
01:40 – 01:55	Presentation and collective prioritisation	15 min	Gallery walk / dot voting
01:55 – 02:00	Conclusions and next steps	5 min	Closing round

6. Description of the Workshop Activities

6.1 Welcome and Participatory Opening

Duration: 10 minutes | Facilitation technique: opening circle / quick check-in

The session will begin with a short welcome and presentation of the workshop objectives. Participants will be invited to answer an opening question, such as: “What is one challenge that a first-year student coming from another country or another city may face when arriving at the university?”

6.2 Short Introduction to European Project Logic

Duration: 15 minutes | Format: brief interactive presentation

A concise introduction will be provided on how European cooperation projects are usually structured: needs, target groups, objectives, activities, expected results, European added value, partners and impact.

6.3 Exploring the First-Year Student Journey

Duration: 25 minutes | Facilitation technique: autobiographical narrative / empathy mapping / collective reflection

Participants will explore the journey of a first-year student arriving from another country or from another city. The activity may be based on personal experience, observation or imagined student profiles. The objective is not to analyse individual cases, but to identify shared challenges and opportunities that can inspire concrete project ideas.

6.4 From Challenges to Project Ideas

Duration: 25 minutes | Facilitation technique: brainstorming and small group work

Participants will be divided into small groups. Each group will choose one challenge identified in the previous activity and transform it into a possible European project idea. The aim is to move from “student integration problems” to “possible European projects”.

6.5 Project Idea Canvas

Duration: 25 minutes | Facilitation technique: project canvas / co-design template

Each group will complete a simple European Project Idea Canvas to structure its proposal and clarify the main need, target groups, objectives, activities, expected results, European dimension and possible partners.

6.6 Presentation and Collective Prioritisation

Duration: 15 minutes | Facilitation technique: gallery walk / dot voting

Each group will briefly present its project idea. Participants will then collectively identify the most promising ideas using criteria such as relevance, feasibility, innovation, potential impact, capacity to improve inclusion and European cooperation potential.

6.7 Conclusions and Next Steps

Duration: 5 minutes | Facilitation technique: closing round

The workshop will close with a short reflection on the ideas developed. Participants may be invited to answer: “Which idea could most improve the integration of first-year international and non-local students, and why?”

7. Project Idea Canvas

Element	Guiding Question
Project title	What could the project be called?
Main need	What integration challenge does it address?
Target groups	Which students or university actors will benefit?
Objectives	What does the project want to improve?
Main activities	What could be done in practice?
Expected results	What concrete outputs or changes are expected?

European dimension	Why should this be a European project?
Possible partners	Which universities, NGOs or student organisations could be involved?

8. Expected Outputs

- A shared map of integration challenges faced by first-year international and non-local students.
- Several initial ideas for European projects.
- One or more prioritised project concepts.
- A preliminary Project Idea Canvas for the most promising proposals.
- Initial indications of possible target groups, activities, results and partners.

9. Possible Follow-Up

- Refining the most promising project ideas.
- Identifying suitable European funding programmes.
- Searching for international partners.
- Structuring a short concept note.
- Preparing future applications under Erasmus+, CERV or other relevant European programmes.

10. Practical Note for Participants

In order to facilitate the interactive activities, it would be useful if participants could bring a laptop or tablet. If this is not possible, they will also be able to participate using their mobile phones.