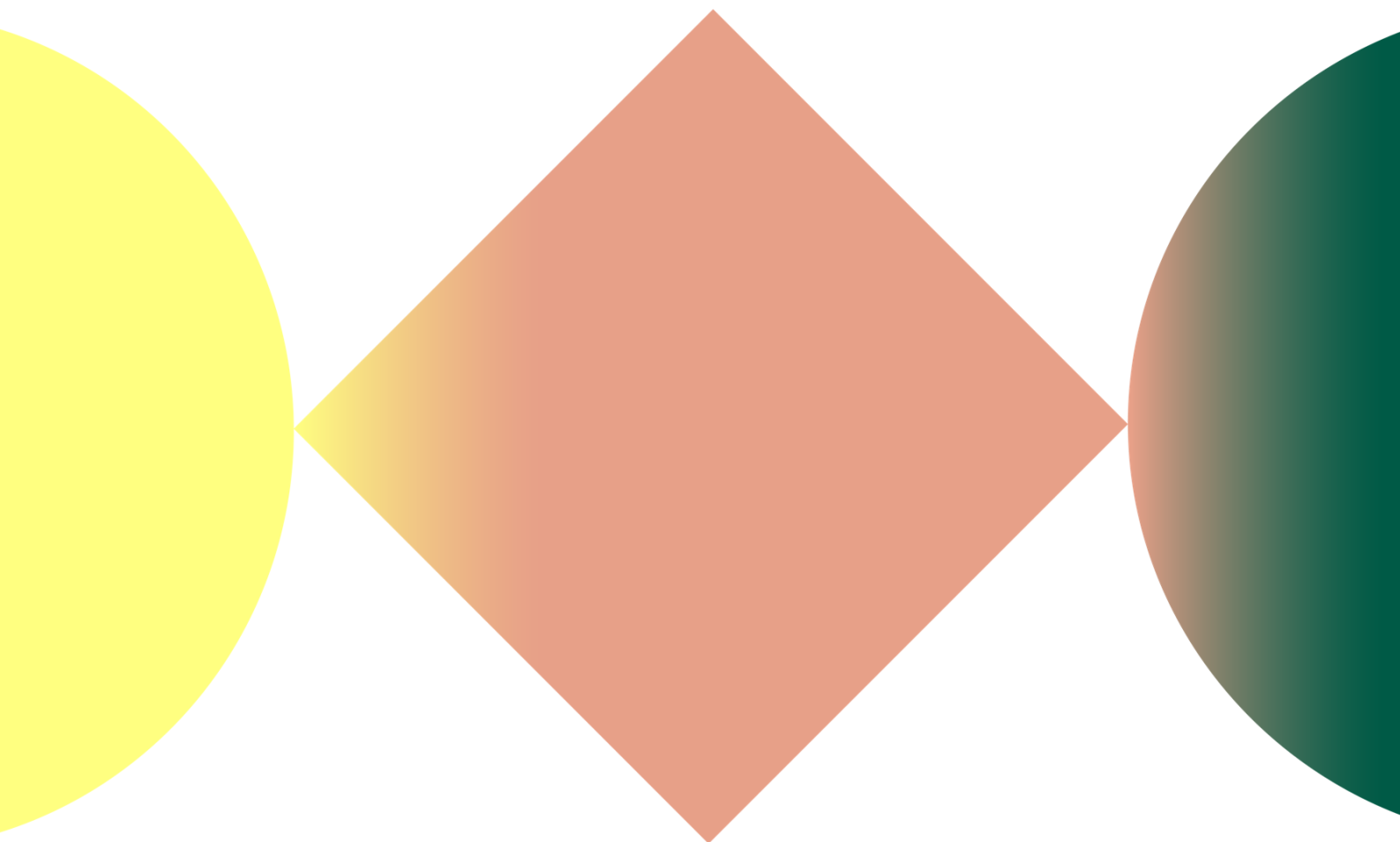


The joint Una Challenge



Una Europa Joint Innovative Format for Education





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What?

The Una Challenge is a **transnational competition** based on **Una Europa's approach to challenge-based learning**. Between 10 days to 2 months, it engages teams of students across the alliance with **real-world challenges** and provides them with the **skills to conceptualise and solve complex problems**.

The Una Challenge enables students to work in **interdisciplinary and international teams** in an online learning environment, gaining the skills to find solutions to real issues involving stakeholders and need for ideas, while working in an **intercultural environment**.

The Una Europa challenge is organised in collaboration between Una Europa universities and has an inherently **international and interdisciplinary perspective**. It is simultaneously rooted locally by working with local partners to ensure implementation and diverse perspectives.

Why?

The Una Challenge aims for **real life impact of the students' ideas and concepts on society**. During the challenge, students from across Europe develop solutions to challenges shared globally, at European level or locally. They work on authentic problems and engage with stakeholders dealing with those problems, thus generating a broader impact for local and regional communities in Europe.

The Una Challenge adopts a **true research-based and interdisciplinary approach to challenge-based learning** by engaging universities, staff, researchers, specialists, students and non-academic experts and stakeholders in the format. By collaborating across institutions, these challenges have also a very intercultural approach, bringing experts and perspectives from across our alliance.

The Una Challenge also supports students **develop relevant skills** in terms of conceptualising and addressing complex challenges. **Students are considered experts with research skills** and are actively encouraged to use all their skills. They do not only acquire subject-related knowledge, but they also adopt an intercultural perspective on the topic, develop their ability to work in international teams and discover the realities and challenges faced across Europe.

Students are engaging with others as fellow Una Europa students and collaborators and can stay engaged in Una Europa after the challenge. This is not a stand-alone initiative where the only goal is to "win", but a **community building exercise** where the conversations, collaborations and sharing of local and personal realities are an equally essential part of the concept that adds value to the students, Una Europa and everyone involved.

How?

1. Defining the concept

a) Choose the theme

- To create a meaningful challenge-based learning experience, it is essential to choose a **relevant, engaging, and interesting theme**, and define clearly the **scope and final goals** of the challenge.
- To maximise the impact and learning process of the students, the theme shall be connected to a **real, concrete issue**.
- The themes can be decided by the coordinating university, students or in collaboration with local communities and external stakeholders.
- Having a broad enough theme is important to ensure enough relevant challenges under the overarching theme and a big enough scope of issues that different students might be interested in.

*Una Europa implemented three Una challenges: **Una.Ten** – “**Transform Emergency Now! 10 days for change**” focused on challenges related to the Covid-19 post-emergency times and in particular on redefining entertainment and culture; safeguarding privacy and preventing misconceptions in a digital world; ensuring traveller safety; and avoiding food waste. During **Una.Futura**, students developed solutions to challenges related to digitalisation, such as digital empowerment; digital citizenship; digital economy; augmented human; cyber threats; mental well-being and social relations in the digital world. For **Una.Together**, students were tasked with the development of solutions to challenges related to diversity, equity and inclusion across the Una Europa campuses.*

b) Define the format

- The length and format of the challenge should be decided in connection with the topic, learning outcomes and expected final results of the challenge.

*The three Una Challenges had different structures and lengths, depending on the aims of the challenge. **Una.Together** for example was based on real challenges brought up by each Una Europa university. **The challenge had two goals:** 1. Make the students work together in teams to solve the challenge and dive into the research and concepts behind diversity, and 2. Make the students feel part of a community and build an identity as Una Europa students. These two goals shaped the format, which was six weeks and two meetings a week, first having four lectures to explore the research and terminology and experiences of diversity and later having six workshops to put things into practice.*

2. Recruiting students

- Recruiting students is of course an essential part of the Una Challenge. The Una Challenges are **highly interdisciplinary**, and thus **open and attractive for students coming from various disciplines**.
- While preparing the **communication**, it is important to focus on two aspects: first, framing the challenge to make it appealing enough to the students, and second, being very clear about the expectations towards the students. The students must know what they are signing up for, what will be expected from them (especially as teamwork is a central part), and the workload of the programme. Being clear about this will ensure the recruitment of students who will be committed throughout the entire challenge.
- In an international setting, collaborating with local colleagues is another important part. They know best how to reach their students and what channels are available for promoting and communicating the opportunity. It is also important to have an eye-catching and recognisable visual identity for the programme to get the students' attention.
- Once the students are recruited, students' teams must be formed. Local and/or international teams can be constituted; in both cases, the programme shall offer several opportunities for international cooperation between students.

For Una.Together, a clear timeline and timetable of the program was created during the promotion phase, so that students knew every single meeting and time that they were expected to participate. A booklet was made, and an online info session was also organised.

3. Implementing the programme

- The programme can be organised in many different ways. The most important part is it teaches the students **the skills and competences** they will need to take an overarching challenge or question and transform it into a real, tangible issue that they can find a solution for. Within that process many skills are needed, and they can be either directly taught through workshops or discussed more indirectly.
- Essential skills for the actual challenge-based learning are:
 - Defining the problem
 - Researching and understanding the problem
 - Understanding the users/people who have the problem
 - Identifying the solution,
 - Being able to present it, and
 - Possibly implement it or at least understand the steps that implementation takes.
- Pedagogies include the use of business model canvas, design thinking, empathy mapping, pitching, etc.
- It is important to have **good facilitators and guides** on the way, for the teams to turn to. In Una Europa students will mostly be working online and with students from different universities and cultures. This can both bring challenges in the team dynamics but of course also cultural misunderstandings or difference. Facilitators should be able to deal with both issues of **team dynamics** and **facilitating dialogue and understanding** while preferably also supporting the team with the actual work on the challenge.
- Other roles can include:
 - Experts: people with expertise on the subject areas of the challenge
 - Mentors: People who are working with one team with strong knowledge in the process of challenge-based learning and identifying solutions
 - Local experts: In the case of Una.Together, these were people with knowledge on the particular topic of diversity from their university. The challenge gathered experts from each university working in a position related to the issue who could bring contextual knowledge.
 - Facilitators: as mentioned above
 - Speakers: bringing in people to speak on issues, whether related to teamwork, the topic of the challenge itself or workshops on the tools and skills students need.

4. Impact and follow up

- Giving students a chance to **present their ideas** and providing a **big final showcase** can be very rewarding. It shows them the importance of their ideas and their work. This is also a good opportunity to practice presenting and showcasing ideas for the students.
- There can be a **prize for the best ideas** chosen by a jury or rather a recognition of all ideas.
- It is essential when working on real problems to give students the opportunity to **have real impact** with their ideas. It is not enough to give them space to present their ideas; **the ideas need to be taken seriously** before and during the challenge, but also, and in particular, after the challenge-based learning format.
- How to share the results or ideas, whom to share them with and how to give opportunities and spaces for students to share and make something with these results? It is also important that the organisers have a plan about **how to share the knowledge** within the organisation or network, to show students that their solutions are appreciated and listened to.
- Many ways can be imagined to share the solutions: creating a report, making short videos, infographics, presentations, social media campaigns or posts about the solutions, an event or something else.
- Having **several different approaches to disseminating the ideas and solutions** is also a good way to engage many different stakeholders, including other students, but also leadership and decision-makers: different formats work with different audiences.



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