AGILE

Design and implementation of business-academia collaboration for Ukrainian refugees' resilience

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Partnership

Partner n°	Name	Short name	Country	Logo
1.	University Paris 8	UP8	France	
2.	University Bordeaux Montaigne	UBM	France	
3.	Web2Learn	W2L	Greece	
4.	University of Ljubljana	UL	Slovenia	
5.	Polish Rectors Foundation	PRF	Poland	
6.	Lviv Polytechnic National University	LPNU	Ukraine	
7.	University of Hamburg	UH	Germany	
8.	Kaunas University of Technology	KTU	Lithuania	

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DISCLAIMER:

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Executive summary

Design and implementation of business-academia collaboration for Ukrainian refugees' resilience

Refugee resilience is forged through collective, cross-sectoral collaboration for social good. Especially in times of social disruption and crises, academia and the private sector are called to unite forces to transform challenges into opportunities, particularly for disadvantaged groups, like refugees, who need to rebuild their lives in new socio-cultural settings. Thus, this report explores the key role of academia-business cooperation in addressing Ukrainian refugee challenges through open innovation and entrepreneurship, as reflected in the AGILE project experimentations.

In particular, the report is part of the EU-funded AGILE project ("Higher education resilience in refugee crises: Forging social inclusion through capacity building, civic engagement, and skills recognition"), specifically its Work Package 4 Activity 2 (WP4A2) 'Academy-Society Experiment #1: Industry-Academia to address the refugee crisis - Innovation 5.0'. These experimentations aimed to combine academic excellence with business-empowered solutions to build resilience by ensuring inclusion and enhance skills among Ukrainian refugee students and scholars.

The report details a series of four events that brought together academia, business and Ukrainian refugee communities, namely: a) a crash course, b) a digital lab, c) a hackathon Challenge and d) a crowdsourcing sprint. These sequential experimentations emphasised the value of cross-sectoral collaborations as a means to address complex challenges faced by Ukrainian refugees. Hence, Web2Learn, as the leader of these experimentation series, adopted a holistic approach to scale up entrepreneurship potential to facilitate integration and self-agency of Ukrainian refugees into the host communities. Thus, the report provides a concrete overview of academia-business-driven innovation by showcasing solutions ideated by students, researchers, refugees and industry representatives. Moreover, Web2Learn assessed the competences and experiences developed in people involved in the academia-business actions through a survey whose results are presented in this report.

The report ends with an overview of challenges and opportunities observed during the implementation and evaluation of the four events, aiming to trigger further academia-business actions for refugee resilience.

Introduction and scope

"Every refugee carries the potential to contribute to society; our task is to remove the barriers in their way. Refugees are not a burden; they are partners in innovation and resilience."

António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations

The growing wave of refugee crises – increased due to armed conflicts and socio-environmental disasters- necessitates a paradigm shift in solutions centred on social cohesion, economic inclusion and the promotion of diversity. In this challenging landscape, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), as hubs of knowledge creation and innovation, are playing a crucial role in aligning academic excellence with real-world priorities for societal resilience. Hence, through strategic collaboration with the private sector, HEIs are called to develop innovative mechanisms that empower disaster-affected populations to enhance refugee students and scholars' integration into host societies and academic communities.

This report is a result of the EU-funded AGILE activity "Academia-society experimentation #1: Industry-academia to tackle refugee crises – Innovation 5.0". Thanks to AGILE, European HEIs aim to strengthen their capacity to promote resilience, social inclusion and skills recognition among refugee and displaced populations, with a special focus on Ukrainian refugees. The project emphasises creating and developing strategic partnerships involving academia, industry and society focused on participatory and innovative practices (e.g. hackathon, crowd-based innovation, etc.).

In this context, this report presents the outcomes of the WP4A2 experimentations by highlighting their unique design as manifested at: a crash course, a digital lab, a hackathon Challenge and a crowdsourcing sprint. The overall aim of these experimentations was to empower Ukrainian refugee students and scholars by a) equipping them with the knowledge and skills to become co-creators of their futures, b) showcasing the importance of entrepreneurship and innovation in building self-reliance and resilience.

The report follows the progression of the experimentations, namely from ideation to implementation of participants' concepts and business models. Finally, it explores the comprehensive methodological approach, the dynamics of engaging participants and showcases tangible outcomes of the fruitful cross-sectoral collaborations.

The value of academia-business cooperation for refugee resilience

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), there are over 43.4 million refugees worldwide (UNHCR, May 2024). As a result, the global refugee crisis has reached unprecedented levels, fuelled by armed conflict, environmental disasters, and persecution. Hence, both refugees and host societies feel the need to strengthen their capacity to withstand shocks and become more resilient to current and future crises. In this context, combining academia- and business-driven creativity and expertise emerges as a powerful trigger for economic growth, societal resilience and communities' revival (Zourou, Boichenko & Oikonomou, 2024).

In host societies, refugees are usually faced with limited access to education, employment opportunities and social support (UNHCR, 2023). While humanitarian assistance is crucial during emergencies, solid, cross-sectoral structures and networks ought to be developed to ensure long-term refugees' integration and empowerment. Within this understanding of action taking, the UN Global Compact on Refugees clearly spells out the need for targeted measures that alleviate poverty and foster self-sufficiency and resilience among refugees (2024).

Thus, the private sector's engagement in refugee-oriented initiatives could also be beneficial as a means to tackle barriers that refugees face. Indicatively, there are issues of capital exclusion, laws and professional networks that could be addressed through inventive business models and technology. Interestingly, industry's interest in fortifying entrepreneurship opportunities for refugees is on the rise, acknowledging the business potential and creativity present within refugee communities (Newman et al., 2024).

Likewise, international policy frameworks emphasise the need of utilising business innovation to foster resilience amongst refugees. In particular, the European Commission's Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion (2021-2027), specifically it's No 6 objective, clearly refers to integration into the labour market and promotion of entrepreneurship among asylum seekers and refugees (European Commission, 2024). Thus, the Plan gives member-states the leeway to curtail measures that obstruct professional opportunities for refugees, as well as to promote actions that ease their access to finance and training for those refugees seeking to venture into businesses.

Moreover, according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), refugee self-employment can not only enhance self-sufficiency but allow refugees to assimilate into a new society and boost the host country's economy as well (OECD, 2019). Hence, the status of refugees seeking to set up businesses should be addressed through the development of necessary policies that provide appropriate support services, reduce administrative burdens, and build enabling environments for such activities. In this context, the EU has undertaken several initiatives to support young Ukrainian entrepreneurs through its Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs programme (Single Market Programme (SMP), 2023), while it keeps promoting welcoming and integration of Ukrainian refugees following the European Commission's 10-point Plan "For stronger European coordination on welcoming people fleeing the war from Ukraine" (2022).

Additionally, the rapid evolution of digitally-enhanced innovation has emerged as a true gamechanger for refugees, whose access to resources, information, and connections is now greatly facilitated. For example, digital marketing channels provide opportunities for displaced people who have artistic skills to market their work around the world while online platforms for education ensure that those who have barriers to education can learn (Hatayama, 2018). However, to spearhead these innovations, it requires a concerted effort from both academia and industry that should involve students, researchers, refugees, and business practitioners in participatory initiatives where solutions to refugees' problems are developed collectively, instead of separately (Zourou & Oikonomou, 2023a).

By turning our attention to the needs of Ukrainian refugees, the AGILE experimentations presented in this report emphasise the value of equipping refugees with entrepreneurship knowledge and skills that combine humanitarian and developmental aims (Zourou, Boichenko, & Oikonomou, 2024). Thus, these series of actions signalled a basis to approach Ukrainian refugees as business-developers who focus both on self-promotion but also contribute to wider societal resilience. Thus, it is in this context that academia-business collaborations and strategies should be encouraged to achieve long-lasting and a just vision for the prosperity of Ukrainian refugees (Zourou & Oikonomou, 2023b).

Designing business-academia innovative actions for Ukrainian refugees

The series of experimentations organised by Web2Learn (October-December 2024) aimed to address a particular gap that limits Ukrainian refugees' empowerment, namely the current disassociation between academic communities (students, researchers, teaching staff, etc.) and the business sector with regards to participatory and digitally-enhanced actions to upskill refugees as future entrepreneurs and innovators. To tackle such gap and scale up the degree of knowledge and skills acquired by Ukrainian refugees, Web2Learn designed the four actions to a) enable Ukrainian refugees to learn about entrepreneurship from experts and test their ideas while creating spaces for networking and collaboration among students, researchers and industry. Figure 1 depicts the scaling dimension that has been adopted to increment impact and effectiveness of the experimentations on participants.
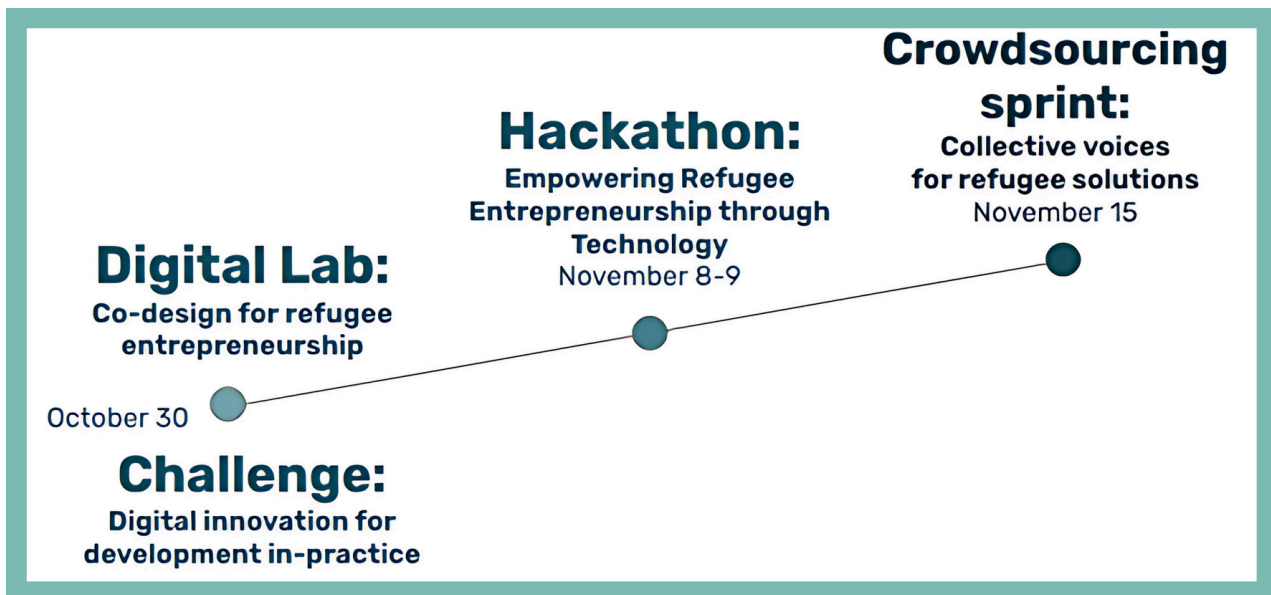

Figure 1. Scaling up knowledge and skills of Ukrainian refugees on innovative entrepreneurship: the academia-society experimentation #1. Design and implementation of Web2Learn.

These series of experimentations began with two events, "Digital innovation for development in-practice" and "Digital Lab: Co-design for refugee entrepreneurship" during which participants were engaged in ideation sessions to generate innovative ideas for solving Ukrainian refugee challenges through digital technologies.

The knowledge and insights generated out of the two events were further enhanced with the organisation of a DigiEduHack hackathon Challenge on the topic of "Empowering refugee entrepreneurship through technology". During this online event, teams of students, guided by industry and academia experts, deployed digital technologies (e.g. online platforms, mobile apps, etc.) to identify solutions that would promote Ukrainian refugees' entrepreneurship.

The last experimentation included a crowdsourcing sprint "Collective voices for refugee solutions" that aimed to bring forward to wider audiences the topic of Ukrainian refugees' empowerment through academia-business. Thus, during this online sprint, teams of students presented the ideas and solutions developed during the first three experimentations, while industry representatives provided further insights and recommendations for improvement and potential opportunities in real-life applications. The sprint was completed with the public vote of the best solution, thus strengthening Ukrainian refugee students' self-agency, sense of ownership and engagement in academia-business models of cooperation.

In terms of design, engaging diverse audiences, from the EU and Ukraine, was instrumental to ensure and promote wider communication and networking opportunities for all interested parties (academic and business experts, students). Hence, this approach didn't only expand the geographical scope of the experimentations, but it also tapped into various socio-economic and professional strands. Additionally, the sequential design of the events aimed to get participants closer to ideating, developing and eventually deploying solutions with real-life application potential, while industry representatives were actively involved at every stage so that the solutions adopt a true academia-business collaboration format.

To facilitate the ideation of actionable initiatives and solutions for Ukrainian refugees, all four events included support by mentors. Hence, mentors played an important role in guiding and advising participants, especially those who were not involved before in such experimentations for entrepreneurship. Finally, the experimentations combined the educational and training dimension coupled with business-oriented frameworks of operation and collaboration. Thus, they sought to emphasise the multifaceted needs of Ukrainian refugees to boost participants' creativity, networking and innovations to drive real change.

The four academia-society experimentations (#1)——

Digital innovation for development in practice

Event 1

Design

To upskill participants in ideating solutions to Ukrainian refugee needs, the course encouraged them to engage in interactive group sessions where they collaboratively designed and pitched innovative projects. Participants were asked to reflect and utilise industry-academia collaboration for social and digital innovation, focusing on applications that could be feasible to implement and would result in impactful solutions.

Key Feautures

Location
University of Turin, Italy

Duration
6 hours

Delivery type
Face-to-face, with online participation of expert speakers.

Participants
11

Date
30 October, 2024

Target audience
Students doing a masters in social innovation

Implementation

The course was organised by Dr Anna Berti Suman, social innovator and environmental lawyer, in collaboration with Web2Learn, and it was attended by students of the Master's programme "ICT for Development and Social Good" at the University of Turin. Through intensive teamwork, participants came up with innovative projects for refugees, thus showcasing the inspirational and action-oriented experience provided to participants.

Results

The course strengthened the ties between academia and industry, paving the way for future technology transfer and joint initiatives, utilising the AGILE project framework. By the end of the course, each student group presented their innovative solutions, demonstrating how digital and social innovation can address refugee issues through academia-industry collaboration. Overall, the course gave participants the opportunity to apply theory into practice by co-designing concrete solutions to pressing refugee humanitarian challenges.

Business and academia representation

Dr. Anna Berti Suman provided mentorship support to students, thus showcasing academia-driven expertise in social innovation for environmental justice. From the private sector, Web2Learn provided advice, examples of academia-business cooperation for Ukraine and more insights about the AGILE project and its approach to resilience.

Openings

Building on this successful course, the following AGILE experimentations aimed to reach wider audiences and involve more European universities. Additionally, the course's participating teams were invited to take part at the other 3 experimentations. This way, students had the opportunity to continue improving their ideas by receiving concrete advice by experts of industry and academia, thus offering more opportunities for students and refugees to engage in innovative projects.

Digital Lab: Co-design for refugee entrepreneurship

Event 2

Design

The Digital Lab aimed to scale up knowledge and skills of Ukrainian refugees on entrepreneurship and its application at EU level. Thus, a series of expert talks and interactive sessions -supervised by industry and academia representatives- sought to foster entrepreneurial skills, such as adaptability and problem solving, while encouraging creativity, and leveraging digital tools to create viable business models and prototypes that promote economic inclusion and self-sufficiency for refugees. Through mentorship and hands-on collaboration, participants gained the skills and knowledge necessary to transform ideas into actionable business concepts.

Key Feautures

Location
Online

Delivery type
Workshop

Date
30 October, 2024

Duration
2.5 hours

Participants
33

Target audience
Refugees, students, business and tech mentors

Implementation

The Lab brought together refugees, students, business representatives and mentors to collaboratively develop innovative project ideas and business models for solving Ukrainian refugee challenges. Participants engaged in ideation and business model creation sessions that enhanced teamwork in breakout rooms that were facilitated by mentors. The Lab was concluded with final presentations of business concepts thanks to which teams received expert feedback to refine their solutions.

Results

The participatory design of the Lab encouraged networking and the development of problem-solving skills, thus empowering participants to transform their ideas into actionable business ventures. The teams presented their concepts focused on digital solutions for Ukrainian refugees' inclusion in education, health and well-being initiatives, and women-led refugee entrepreneurship. Overall, the Digital Lab upskilled Ukrainian refugees on the value and tools of entrepreneurship and established a solid ground for ongoing development of their business venture ideas.
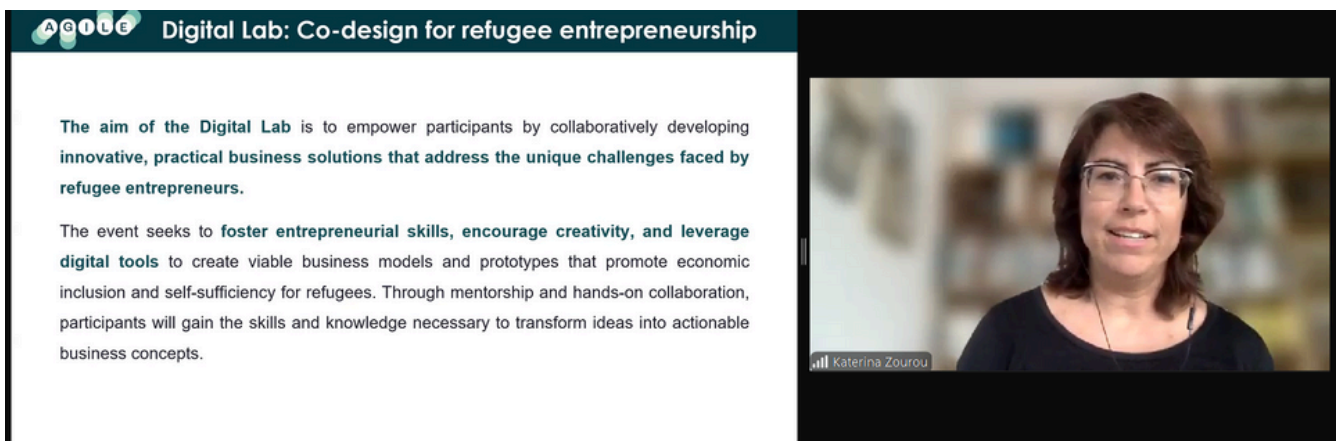

Figure 2. Opening of the Digital Lab by Web2Learn's CEO, Katerina Zourou

Business and academia representation

Invited speakers - Olesia Malovana, co-founder of the Ukrainian Hub, expert in Ukrainian Startup Fund, and Anastasiia Bortnik, expert in innovation, business development, and marketing, USAID consultant, brought invaluable industry experience and academic insights, guiding participants through the co-design process. Moreover, the invited mentors were: Olha Maliarchuk, PhD, expert in digital education and technology-driven learning solutions, Anna Shilinh, PhD, expert in social support systems and mental well-being, Serhii Puzko, PhD, expert in environmental sustainability and eco-innovation, Vlada Fursa, PhD, expert in women's entrepreneurship and business leadership, and Ievgen Smyrnov, PhD, expert in digital commerce platforms and product development. This blend of business representatives and academic expertise ensured that participants received comprehensive support in developing their entrepreneurial solutions, emphasising the value of academia-industry collaboration for refugees' empowerment.

Openings

As in the first event, participating teams of the Digital Lab were highly encouraged to join the forthcoming experimentations, particularly the AGILE hackathon Challenge. The Lab enhanced students' interest to further scale up their entrepreneurial ideas, thus forging the way for additional opportunities to improve participants' digital projects.

Figure 3. Part of the ideation session of the Digital Lab, October 30, 2024

DigiEduHack hackathon Challenge "Empowering refugee entrepreneurship through technology"

Event 3

Design

This hackathon Challenge aimed to foster participants' skills and ideas to tackle barriers Ukrainian refugees face when starting their businesses, from navigating complex legal frameworks to securing financing and accessing markets. Thus, within 24 hours, participants worked online in teams to design and develop solutions that empower refugees to become successful entrepreneurs in their host countries.

Key Feautures

Location
Online

Duration
24 hours

Delivery type
2-day virtual event

Participants
51

Date
November 8-9, 2024

Target audience
Students, researchers, education professionals, NGOs/Non-profits, entrepreneurs, refugees.

Implementation

Participants were encouraged to focus on creating user-friendly, scalable solutions that facilitate refugees' integration into the local economy and empower them to contribute meaningfully through entrepreneurship. In particular, teams addressed three essential areas: (1) innovative tools that support educational access and skills development tailored to refugees' unique needs and contexts; (2) technology-driven approaches that promote refugees' social well-being, access to health resources, and overall community integration; (3) solutions that empower women refugees to lead and manage businesses, offering tools and support that address their specific challenges and opportunities.

Results

The Challenge successfully produced 7 solutions designed to empower Ukrainian refugee entrepreneurs. The winning solution was the Learning Bridge project, that stands out for its innovative integration of mentorship, training, EU-specific funding guides, and community building into a single platform, filling critical gaps in support for refugees. The Challenge showcased the potential of technology to address refugee entrepreneurship challenges and strengthened the community of innovators committed to fostering economic inclusion.
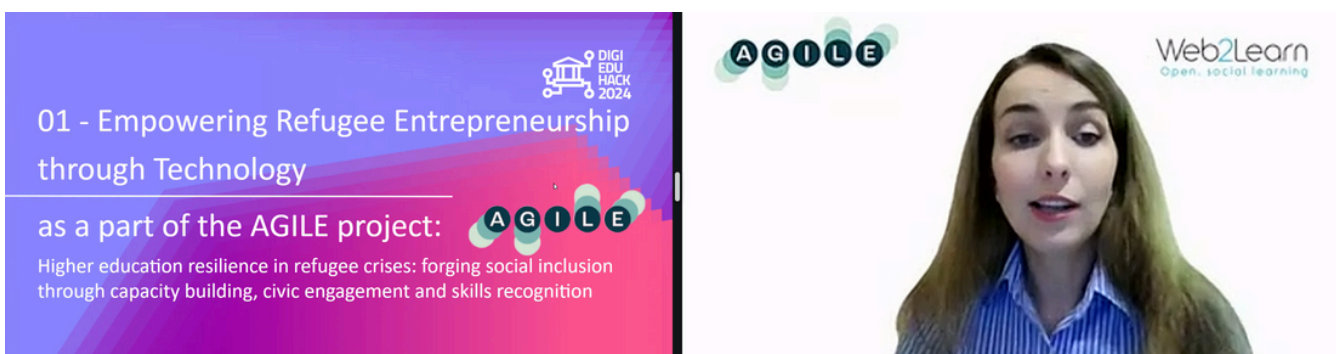

Figure 4. Kateryna Boichenko, host

Business and academia representation

The hackathon brought together a dynamic mix of academia and business representatives as mentors and judges, ensuring a diverse range of expertise to guide participants. The mentors included distinguished professionals like Kateryna Boichenko, PhD, research collaborator at Web2Learn (Greece), Liudmyla Petrenko, expert on intellectual property and innovative entrepreneurship (Germany), Oleksii Chepelevych, founder at AchUkraine (Ukraine-Germany), Olena Pelekh, expert at TEAM International (USA), Maksym Budiaiev, PhD in Economics, startup advisor (Ukraine). Mentors from the previous Digital Lab also continued to support the teams: Olha Maliarchuk, Vlada Fursa, Anna Shilinh, Ievgen Smyrnov and Serhii Puzko.

The panel of judges featured prominent academics and business leaders, including Katerina Zourou, Managing Director of Web2Learn (Greece), Hanna Godlewska-Majkowska, Professor at Warsaw School of Economics (Poland), Viktoriia Siedova, Co-Founder of The Good Plastic Company (Austria), Inna Riepina, Dr of Ec. Sc., Head of the Business Economics and Entrepreneurship at Kyiv National Economic University (Ukraine), and Vitalii Suprun, expert in European affairs and European integration, College of Europe (Poland).

Openings

Thanks to its engaging format that included expert mentorship, collaborative ideation, and competitive pitching sessions, the hackathon Challenge created a vibrant space for co-creation and innovation. Following the success of the hackathon, it would be extremely beneficial to keep expanding this model of business-academia collaboration that can serve as a catalyst for refugee's empowerment and resilience. The Challenge's team leaders were invited to the fourth and final experimentation, the crowdsourcing sprint, to present their solutions to a wider public, get feedback from experts of the business sector and inspire participants, including refugees.

Crowdsourcing sprint "Collective voices for refugee solutions"

Event 4

Design

The event aimed to bring together refugees, students, researchers, business representatives, and NGOs in an interactive online sprint accelerator to showcase and refine innovative solutions for refugee integration in education, mental health, and entrepreneurship. Building upon ideas developed during the Digital Lab and the hackathon, teams presented their actionable concepts to the public. This crowdsourcing event sought to generate constructive feedback, encourage community engagement, and prioritise solutions through audience participation and voting.

Key Feautures

Location
Online

Delivery type
Sprint accelerator

Date
November 15, 2024

Duration
1.5 hour

Participants
66

Target audience
Refugees, students, researchers, business representatives, NGOs

Implementation

The sprint began with teams showcasing their innovative projects to the diverse audience, creating a vibrant platform for collaboration and ideas' sharing. Each team had the opportunity to get comprehensive advice and recommendations from the expert advisors of the private sector. The crowdsourcing sprint emphasised community engagement by inviting participants to provide real-time feedback and vote on the most impactful solutions. This inclusive approach fostered a sense of shared responsibility and allowed participants to prioritise ideas that addressed the most pressing challenges faced by Ukrainian refugee communities.

Results

The interactive format allowed for enriching brainstorming and targeted advice for the refinement of the projects based on the three key themes (educational integration, mental health support, and entrepreneurial empowerment for refugees). The sprint validated the proposed solutions through collective input and fostered a sense of community and ownership among team members, reinforcing the collaborative spirit of the AGILE project. The audience voted for its favourite solution, with five out of seven teams receiving similar levels of support. High and active participation during the event underscores its success in generating impactful and widely-supported solutions, paving the way for further development and implementation of the actionable ideas.

Figure 5. Screenshot from the online crowdsourcing sprint.

Business and academia representation

Esteemed advisors from the private sector included Maksym Moneta, venture partner at Founder Institute, founder at the Startupers Online platform (Estonia); Anastasiia Mazur, co-founder and president at My Madeira Island (Portugal); Kostiantyn Melnykov, CEO and Founder at NTI Loyalty (Ukraine); Anastasiia Sleptsova, Co-Founder at Digitizing.Space (Ukraine-Brussels); and Tamara Koliada, Founder at Tech Legion and Product Owner at SayNode Operations AG (Switzerland). These experts provided valuable insights and guidance, ensuring that the solutions were both innovative and practical.

Openings

At the end of the sprint, all participants had the opportunity to vote for the best solution. Interestingly, no single leader emerged, as five out of the seven teams received approximately the same number of votes. This outcome highlights the relevance and demand for more innovative and participatory solutions, reflecting the diverse and pressing needs for Ukrainian refugees' integration. Eventually, possible future plans include organising follow-up events to monitor the progress of the solutions and providing continued support for their development and implementation.

Results —

Results from survey

To evaluate the impact of the AGILE academia-society experimentations (#1), following their completion, we conducted a randomized survey that has been shared with participants of all four events. Thus, we received 46 replies that we analyse in more detail here below.

The post-experimentations survey
The survey was conducted throughout the month of November 2024 and comprised of four questions. Specifically:

Question 1. On a scale to 1 (=not at all) to 5 (=definitely), how much did the AGILE event(s) you participated in enhance your knowledge on academia-industry collaborations for refugee entrepreneurship?

Based on Fig. 6 below, we observe that for the majority of participants (80,4%), the AGILE events achieved their goal; namely to increase their knowledge on academia-industry collaborations for refugee entrepreneurship.
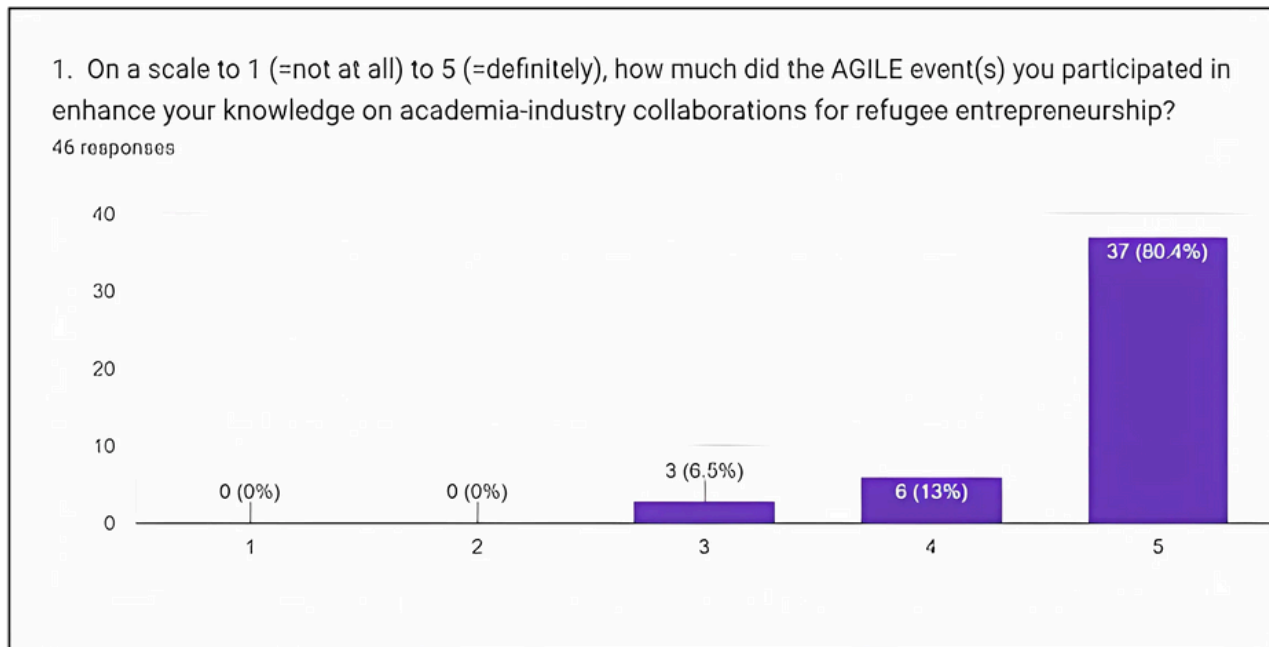

Figure 6. Replies to question 1

Question 2. From the list of entrepreneurial skills below, choose only those you believe you have acquired thanks to the AGILE event(s) you participated in:

Interestingly, the top 5 entrepreneurial skills that the AGILE experimentations have equipped participants with are: 1) creative thinking, 2) collaboration, 3) communication skills, 4) problem-solving, and 5) networking.

Figure 7. Replies to question 2.

Question 3. Did the AGILE event(s) altered your attitude towards academia-industry collaboration as a means to enhance refugee entrepreneurship?

For 63% of participants, the AGILE events had a positive effect when it comes to their attitudes towards academia-industry collaborations as an empowering way to support refugee entrepreneurs.
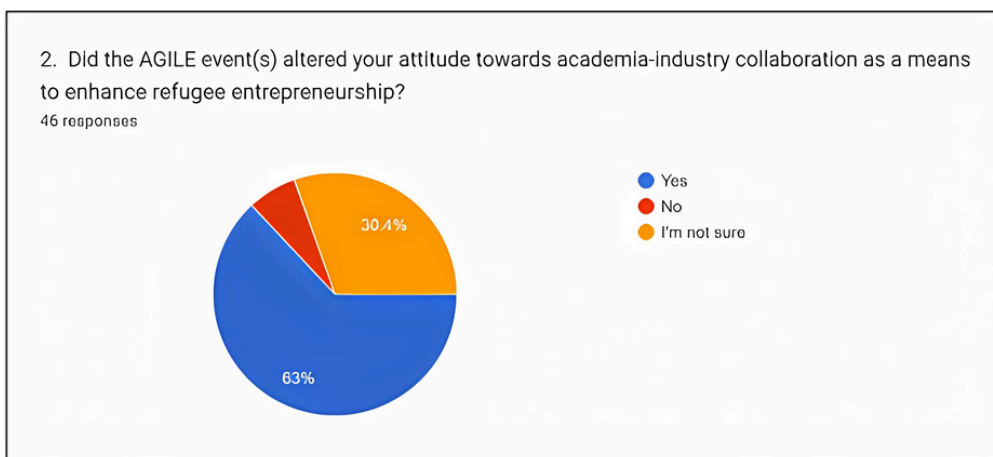

Figure 8. Replies to question 3.

Question 4. If yes, please briefly justify your answer

With this question, we aimed to understand deeper how the AGILE experimentations have altered participants' attitudes. Thus, we received 18 replies that depict how for most participants this type of collaboration was a) either not greatly considered before, b) visible to them but they weren't aware of its potential for refugee entrepreneurship.

> I wasn't fully aware of how business-academia collaboration could have an actual impact on refugees' empowerment and resilience! I was glad to see my old perspective change thanks to the AGILE events.

> AGILE events provided a unique opportunity to create ideas to support refugees using digital tools and develop them with the support of mentors and experts, academia and business. The crowdsourcing sprint brought together the interests of refugees, academia, business, academics, students and all stakeholders and we received feedback in a real-time, audience participatory environment.

> I had no idea how to raise funds for a startup in academia before. Now I understand that it is real and what it should look like.

> the AGILE event(s) altered my attitude towards academia-industry collaboration as a valuable means to enhance refugee entrepreneurship. They demonstrated how combining academic research with industry practices can create practical, innovative solutions to support refugees in building sustainable businesses.

> Agile events created a favorable environment where academic representatives could share their knowledge in entrepreneurship field with potential refugee entrepreneurs, so that they would be successful in implementation business ideas. Academia-industry collaboration could foster the development of refugee entrepreneurship due to offering of new learning opportunities for entrepreneurs and practical guidelines in new business development.

Challenges and opportunities ⸺

Challenges

To embrace the full potential offered by academia-business cooperation for Ukrainian refugees' integration and societal resilience, its crucial to reflect on barriers and opportunities as they emerged following the AGILE experimentations.

Thus, to build solid and long-lasting pathways for improving the lives of refugee students and scholars, HEIs and businesses should take into consideration the following challenges in the implementation of refugee-oriented initiatives:

- **Time constraints:** Refugee and displaced populations often face numerous issues of primary concern (e.g. housing, legal status, bureaucract, etc) that impedes them to dedicate the necessary time to other initiatives during their day. Additionally, working with this target group, necessitates a considerable time investment from institutions and their personnel to ensure concrete and wider impact.

- **Combining different expertise and working cultures:** Academia and the private sector usually adopt divergent, sometimes conflictual, working styles and cultures due to the specificities and modus operandi of each sector. Additionally, in cross-sectoral and interdisciplinary collaborations, the variety of expertise present "in the room" may create more challenges than alignment to the common goal.

- **Different priorities:** Although determined to unite forces for the benefit of refugee populations, academia and the business sector have usually distinctive priorities that may seem impossible to combine.

- **Engaging with people in war zones:** Among the greatest challenges in academia-business actions for refugees is the complexity of engaging with people in socially disruptive and life-threatening situations, like war and armed conflicts. From power cuts to evacuation emergencies and the constant threat of human casualties, your actions are objectively developing within a framework defined by insecurity and unexpected issues.

- **Unequal resource mobilisation capacities:** Depending on the size and resources available per institution, it is quite challenging to assume that universities and business will bring the same amount of effort and investment (in human and material capital) to a collaboration for refugees. Although a reality which is usually acknowledged from the beginning of such collaborations, it is often a common source of discontent among teams.

Opportunities

Despite the aforementioned challenges, the AGILE experimentations provide also an encouraging perspective in academia-business openings for refugees' integration and resilience by pointing to hidden and potential opportunities. In particular:

- **Development of entrepreneurial skills:** As the AGILE hackathon Challenge and crowdsourcing sprint brought to the fore, this kind of academia-business collaborations are true triggers of entrepreneurial skills (e.g. leadership, adaptability, time management, etc.) for refugees and displaced persons. Thus, without the need to mobilise unsustainable resources, such collaborations become the cornerstones of new knowledge and skills transmitted to the affected populations.

- **Continuity and sustainability of actions:** To build resilience, it is imperative to move beyond the "one-off event" perception that is usually adopted by both academia and the private sector and build a culture of continuous engagement with your target group instead. Thus, forging -from the very beginning-a realistic plan that will eventually integrate these actions as regular activities within your institution will sustain their long-term development and enhancement.

- **Participatory and digitally-enhanced approaches deployed:** In times of crises, technology and crowd-based actions are key to address both issues of resources mobilisation and participation. Hence, following the successful implementation of such approach during the AGILE experimentations, it is vital to integrate such practices and tools in the design of your academia-business action for refugees.

- **Empowerment through diversity and cross-cultural exchange:** Diversity of expertise and cultures can be a true added value to your action if approached from the lens of community engagement and solidarity. Thus, by establishing a framework of communication and collaboration that respects and encourages cross-cultural exchange, dialogue and clear allocation of roles and responsibilities, you can overcome culture-related barriers and conflicts within diverse working teams.

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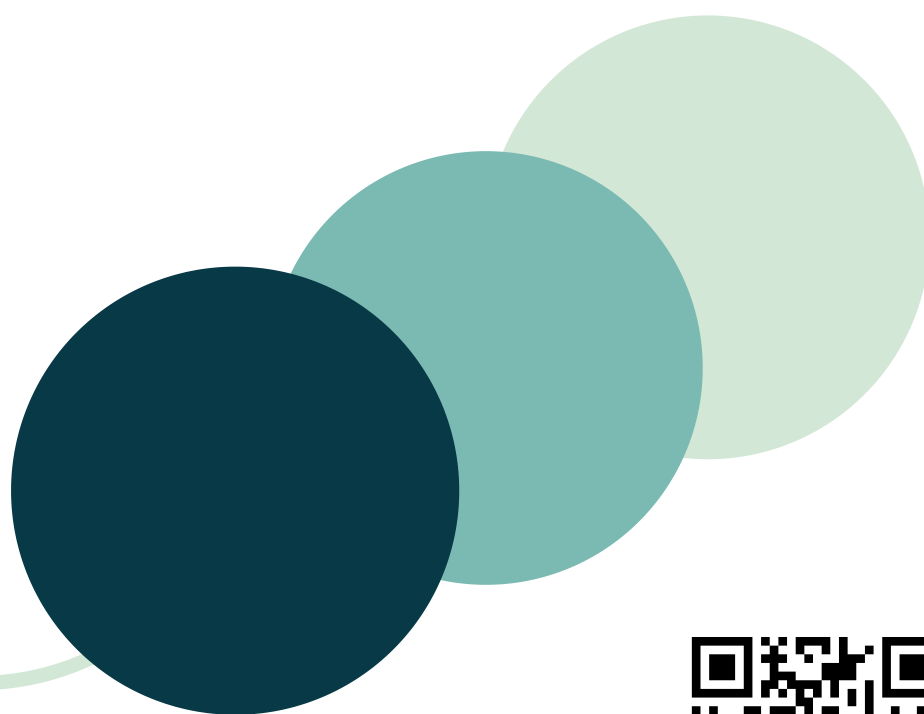
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