



## International Conference

### From Emergency to Ecosystem

#### Designing Belonging for Learners from Crisis Contexts

Friday, 20 March 2026

Venue: University of Lisbon (Reitoria – Alameda da Universidade, 1649-004)

#### Guidelines for Lab Facilitators

##### 1. Labs Structure & Dynamics

Each lab moves through **five phases**

1. Introduction (participants +topic)
2. Problem Framing
3. System Mapping
4. Designing solutions
5. Preparing the Output - résumé/pitch

##### Lab structure

15 participants maximum  
2 facilitators + 1 rapporteur  
5 phases

Phase	Time	Activities
Introduction	30 min	Introduction participants+initial points by co-facilitators+ coordination with rapporteur
Problem Framing	30 min	Identify key challenges – barriers, gaps
System Mapping	30 min	Ecosystem around the problem – players, partnerships, gaps
Designing solutions/pilots	60 min	Proposals for practical and realistic initiatives
Wrap up - Preparing Output	30 min	Preparation of a 3-minute presentation on challenge addressed, solution, key partners & pilot activity

## 2. Design Labs – Backgrounders, Prompts & Possible Outcomes

### LAB 1

#### Inclusive Admissions & Recognition

##### Background

Displaced learners often lack documentation or complete academic records.

Traditional admissions procedures can therefore create barriers to access.

Flexible recognition mechanisms are essential to ensure continuity.

Relevant recommendations:

- Recommendation 1 – Ensure rapid educational continuity
- Recommendation 2 -Create flexible admission pathways

##### Facilitator prompts

- What evidence beyond transcripts could universities accept?
- How can institutions recognise interrupted learning when documentation is incomplete?
- What bridging programmes could accelerate integration?
- How can institutions collaborate to improve recognition systems?

##### Possible outcomes

**1** Alternative credential recognition such as competency-based admissions processes

**2** Bridging semester/preparatory programmes model for displaced learners

**3** Digital credentials portfolio system for academic evidence

# LAB 2

## Belonging & Participation

### Background

Belonging is shaped by:

- peer relationships
- campus participation
- language
- social inclusion

Relevant recommendations:

- Recommendation 4 – Language
- Recommendation 6 – Communities of learning

### Facilitator prompts

- When do students feel excluded from campus life?
- What creates a sense of belonging on campus?
- What initiatives help build peer connections?
- How can student voices shape institutional policy?
- What role can student organizations play?

### Possible outcomes

- 1 Peer mentorship model**
- 2 Student-led belonging councils**
- 3 Campus intercultural initiatives**
- 4 Orientation programmes for displaced learners**

# LAB 3

## Wellbeing Across the Student Journey

### Background

Students from crisis contexts often experience trauma, uncertainty and isolation.

Mental health and wellbeing support is therefore a critical component of student success

However support services may be limited or culturally inaccessible

Relevant recommendation:

- Recommendation 5 – Mental health and wellbeing

### Facilitator prompts

- Where do mental health barriers appear most strongly?
- How can support be culturally sensitive?
- What role can peer support play?
- What early intervention models work best?

### Possible outcomes

- 1 Integrated campus wellbeing hub**
- 2 Trauma-informed faculty training programme/counselling services**
- 3 Peer mental-health ambassador networks**
- 4 Innovative solutions** led by students/alumni/higher education/institutions

# LAB 4

## From Learning to Employment

### Background

Higher education should provide pathways to meaningful employment.

However, displaced learners often face barriers in accessing internships, professional networks, and labour market opportunities.

Strengthening connections between education and employment is therefore essential.

Relevant recommendation:

- Recommendation 9 – Education to employment

### Facilitator prompts

- What barriers prevent (refugee) students from accessing internships?
- How can employers participate earlier in the student journey?
- How can higher education institutions collaborate with employers?
- What role can internships and mentorship programmes play?

### Possible outcomes

- 1** Employer partnerships programmes/consortium
- 2** Internship initiatives
- 3** Cross-sector mentorship networks connecting students with professionals

# LAB 5

## Financing Pathways & Sustainability

### Background

Scholarships are often short-term.

Long-term ecosystem financing is needed.

Relevant recommendation:

- Recommendation 8 – Sustainable funding models

### Facilitator prompts

- What funding models can support belonging beyond scholarships?
- How can public and private sectors collaborate?
- Could pooled funds or blended finance work?

### Possible outcomes

- 1 HELP-style pooled financing mechanism**
- 2 Public-private education solidarity fund/cross-sector financing mechanisms**
- 3 University consortium shared scholarship platform**

# LAB 6

## Designing the Path to 15by30

### Background

Scaling access requires institutions to move from isolated programmes to system design.

United Nations commitments—such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the 15by30 target, and initiatives promoting education complementary pathways—collectively create a reinforcing ecosystem that encourages and enables partners across sectors to do more, collaborate better, and expand opportunities for inclusive and equitable access to education

Relevant recommendations:

- Recommendation 7 – Partnerships
- Recommendation 10 – Ecosystems

### Facilitator prompts

- What institutional changes enable scaling?
- What role should governments play?
- What partnerships are missing?
- How can the EU play a more active role?

### Possible outcomes

- 1 European belonging framework for higher education institutions**
- 2 Cross-sector higher education ecosystem alliances**
- 3 Institutional capacity toolkit for 15by30**
- 4 Scale up education complementary pathways on the model of corridors**

### 3. Expected Outputs from Each Lab

Each lab should produce a **1-page proposal or 3-minute pitch** including:

- 1 Title
- 2 Problem/challenge addressed
- 3 Proposed solution
- 4 Key partners required
- 5 Pilot activities /What can be tested within **12 months**
- 6 Potential next steps

### 4. Lab Facilitation Tips

- ✓ Encourage participation from all participants
- ✓ Support diverse voices in the discussion
- ✓ Keep participants focused on practical **solutions**
- ✓ Avoid long theoretical debates
- ✓ Highlight opportunities for **cross-sector partnerships**
- ✓ Connect ideas link to the **Ten Recommendations**
  
- ✓

### 5. Role of the Rapporteur

The rapporteur summarises key points from the discussion and ensures that the group's ideas are clearly presented during the plenary session, either by giving a pitch or by delivering an oral presentation.

Thank you!