

A Translocal Lives Initiative

Partners in Practice

Impact Report

February 2025



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Introduction

Migration and technology are critical intersections in today's globalized world. These themes are increasingly relevant as societies grapple with challenges and opportunities arising from digital connectivity and cross-border movement. The *Partners in Practice* initiative was developed to address this intersection through a dynamic integration into the **Media and Migration** course, offering students the chance to collaborate with NGOs, government bodies, and grassroots organizations to tackle real-world migration challenges.

The **Media and Migration** course is a research workshop embedded within the **Media, Culture, and Society Master's program at ESHCC**. It combines theoretical exploration with hands-on research, enabling students to critically engage with issues such as the mediated representation of migrants, digital inclusion, and the role of technology in place-making. By fostering interdisciplinary perspectives, the course equips students with analytical tools and practical skills essential for understanding the complexities of migration in a media-saturated world.

To amplify the course's impact and extend learning beyond the classroom, the *Partners in Practice* pilot (October 2024 to February 2025) was conceived as an initiative of the **Translocal Lives Project**. Supported by funding from **Impact at the Core**, the initiative was designed to bridge academic research and societal needs by embedding real-world stakeholder collaborations into the curriculum.

Students worked on case studies directly tied to migration issues, creating tailored outputs such as brochures, reports, and communication strategies that addressed stakeholders' practical needs. This initiative provided a structured platform for students to apply their learning in authentic settings, fostering both academic growth and societal engagement.

About Translocal Lives

Translocal Lives offers a dedicated space for in-depth investigations into **how technology intersects with migration**. Through research, education, and practical projects (e.g. Partners in Practice), we delve into the complexities and contradictions of technology adoption by migrants. Our aim is to foster a nuanced understanding of the challenges posed by technology, as well as the innovative solutions that technological advancements can bring to the complex experiences and narratives of human mobility. Through an inclusive platform and archive, we encourage the exchange of knowledge and ideas to address the multidisciplinary challenges posed by migration and technology.

Visit: www.translocallives.com

Goals

Equip Students with Practical Skills:

Provide students with the tools to conduct impactful research, engage with stakeholders, and translate academic insights into creative outputs.

Address Real-World Migration Challenges:

Facilitate collaborations with stakeholders to tackle pressing migration-related issues, ensuring that students' work has both academic and societal relevance.

Enhance Education Through Partnerships:

Leverage the Impact at the Core funding to build sustainable collaborations between academia and societal partners, enriching both student learning and stakeholder outcomes.

Promote Community Engagement and Social Responsibility:

Inspire students to see themselves as agents of positive societal impact by engaging directly with migration-focused organizations.

Foster Interdisciplinary Learning:

Combine theoretical knowledge with participatory methodologies to encourage a holistic understanding of migration and technology.



From left to right:

Students Bastiaan, Julia, Lui, Hanneke, Michael and Denise; Mo and Barnet from The BAM Collective (partner organization) during the final symposium of the Media and Migration Course. In this session, students presented their outputs to partners.

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Partners

For this pilot, three stakeholders were invited to collaborate, keeping in mind that this term **six students** were taking the Media and Migration course. Students worked both individually and in groups of two, sharing one stakeholder per group.

Re-Starter

Re-starter is a platform dedicated to empowering refugees by helping them rebuild their lives through education, employment opportunities, and the development of meaningful networks. With a vision to enable refugees to contribute positively to their communities in Europe and the MENA region, Re-starter focuses on fostering business projects that deliver essential social services to vulnerable populations. The organization promotes social entrepreneurship by equipping refugees with the skills, intercultural communication abilities, and experiences necessary for their adaptation and success. Through initiatives such as social impact studies, securing grants, coordinating social enterprise projects, and connecting donors with social entrepreneurs, Re-starter serves as a bridge between refugees and the opportunities they need to thrive in their new environments. **Case Study: Labour Migration and Job Opportunities.**

ExPR

ExPR is a network dedicated to fostering connections and inclusivity for newcomers in the Rotterdam region. By partnering with local organizations, ExPR promotes cultural diversity, facilitates knowledge sharing, and encourages active participation in the

community. Its mission is to help newcomers feel at home and contribute positively to Rotterdam through volunteer work and other initiatives while enabling local organizations to benefit from their expertise and networks. ExPR aims to build a thriving community where newcomers share experiences, collaborate with local organizations, and contribute to making Rotterdam a more inclusive city. **Case Study: Migrant Networks and Connectivity.**

The BAM Collective

The BAM Collective is a unique group of artisans and artists navigating life without residence permits, channeling their creativity into crafting beautiful, handmade products. Their products include a diverse range of items, such as bags, cushions, baskets, art prints, t-shirts, and dresses, all created with a commitment to sustainability by using natural, recycled, and upcycled materials. Beyond their craft, BAM Collective seeks to raise awareness about the challenges faced by individuals without residence permits and to highlight their contributions to society. By sharing their stories and collaborating on joint projects, the collective promotes inclusivity and sustainability while advocating for a more understanding and supportive community. **Case Study: Migrant Identity and Belonging.**

Development of the Initiative

The *Partners in Practice* initiative was structured in **three key phases** to ensure effective implementation and meaningful engagement between students and stakeholders.

Building a Network of Stakeholders: This initial phase focused on identifying and establishing partnerships with NGOs, government bodies, and grassroots organizations that were actively addressing migration challenges. Several partners were brought on board to provide diverse perspectives and practical cases for students to explore. This phase also included aligning stakeholder expectations with the goals of the initiative and preparing them for collaboration with students.

A.

B.

C.

Development of the Course: During this phase, students engaged in the academic and practical aspects of the initiative. Besides the thematic sessions that composed the course, key activities included:

- **Introduction and Stakeholders:** Students learned about the initiative's goals and were introduced to the participating organizations.
- **Research Methods and Stakeholder Interviews:** Training sessions equipped students with participatory research skills including desk research, literature review, stakeholder mapping, in-depth interviews to understand stakeholder needs and challenge, as well as thematic analysis for subsequent analysis of interview data
- **Science Communication Workshop:** Students explored ways to translate their research into accessible outputs for non-academic audiences.
- **Midterm Presentations:** Students presented their progress to peers, receiving feedback to refine their projects.
- **Individual Orientation Sessions:** These one-on-one meetings focused on helping students effectively communicate their research insights, providing guidance on structuring their presentations for the symposium and ensuring their findings were accessible and relevant to both academic and stakeholder audiences.

Presentation of Outputs and Evaluation: This concluding phase culminated in the symposium, where students showcased their final outputs, including brochures, communication strategies, and creative solutions tailored to stakeholder needs. Stakeholders provided feedback on the deliverables, and the initiative's impact was assessed through evaluations from both students and partners.

Student Outputs

A defining feature of the *Partners in Practice* initiative was its emphasis on **translating academic research into practical, non-academic outputs** tailored to the needs of partners. Over the course of two months, students conducted in-depth research in collaboration with their assigned stakeholders, integrating insights from **literature reviews, desk research, and interviews**—the primary data-gathering method.

Through this process, students analyzed the collected data to identify key challenges and opportunities, ultimately transforming their findings into actionable outputs that could support the stakeholders' work.

This translation of research into practice required students to think beyond academic conventions, ensuring that their outputs were both rigorous and accessible. Each deliverable was designed to align with the stakeholder's needs while preserving the analytical depth of the research. The culmination of this work was the final symposium, where students presented their outputs, allowing stakeholders to engage with and reflect on the relevance of these contributions.

This section presents the non-academic output created by the three teams that worked with the partners.



PROJECT 1

Empowering Migrant Workforce Integration: A Toolkit for Employers in a Digital Age

As part of their collaboration with **Re-Starter**, students developed a toolkit for employers titled "**Empowering Migrant Workforce Integration in a Digital World.**" This resource provides practical guidance for employers on fostering inclusive workplaces while leveraging digital tools to support migrant employees. Drawing from their two months of research, the students identified key challenges faced by migrants in the job market, such as limited digital skills, low trust in media, and difficulties in workplace integration. The toolkit translates these insights into clear, actionable recommendations for employers, including mentorship programs, digital upskilling initiatives, and transparent recruitment practices.

WHAT STUDENTS SAY ABOUT THIS PROJECT

What would you highlight as the most valuable skill you gained from this project?

Learning how to turn academic research findings into content that can be shared with general audiences, in an engaging and impactful way.



Students Michael and Denise presenting their project to the partner Re-Starter during the symposium.



To download the toolkit visit
www.translocalives.com/resources

PROJECT 2

Instagram for Artists: A Guide for Newcomer Creators

In this case, students collaborated with **The BAM Collective** to develop a brochure titled **"Insta for Artists"**. This visually engaging brochure serves as a practical resource to help migrant and undocumented artists navigate social media for self-promotion, networking, and visibility. Drawing from two months of research, the students identified key challenges faced by newcomers in the creative industry, such as barriers to digital presence, lack of familiarity with social media tools, and concerns about online visibility and security. The brochure addresses these issues by providing step-by-step guidance on setting up an Instagram account, best practices for engagement, and strategies for managing risks such as online discrimination and privacy concerns.

WHAT STUDENTS SAY ABOUT THIS PROJECT

What would you highlight as the most valuable skill you gained from this project?

Diving into someone else's challenge and researching in collaboration with them to produce something that comes from my heart. Very good practice for the job world!



Students Bastiaan and Julia (left) with Mo, a member from the BAM Collective (right) during the final symposium.

Benefits

What are some of the benefits of using Instagram for your art?

Accessibility: Everyone can easily create an Instagram account. All you need is an e-mail address!

Community: Instagram gets you connected to other artists and (art) communities, in Amsterdam and beyond!

Visibility: By creating an Instagram account you can become visible as an artist, a creator, a visionary. More people can encounter your art and consider to buy it. Better yet, they might share it with their friends on Instagram, which means more visibility for you!

Make a statement: Instagram allows you to describe what your art is based on. What does it mean to you? What were your thoughts or feelings behind a specific piece? Who is it for? You can make your statement heard.

Learning: Through creating an Instagram account for your art, you can improve your digital and content creation skills, including photography, editing and communication!

Agency: You decide what you want to share online and who you want to interact with, it's all your choice!

Get inspired: Check out other artist accounts!

What do other artists post? Can you detect an art community on Instagram? What do you observe? Any positive or negative remarks?

Downsides

What are possible downsides or even dangers of using Instagram?

Political Observation: As you might know, state institutions observe some people's online activity, which may have an effect on their legal procedures. Make sure you talk to friends and professionals about this, to avoid unwanted consequences. What do you post, what not?

Discrimination: While the internet suggests to be a place for everyone, it is also a place where hate and discrimination flourishes. This is not acceptable in any way and should be reported. However, there is no guarantee that you will be given justice.

Pressure or stress: There might be people (e.g. friends or family members, but also total strangers) that will dislike what you post. Beware, that a public account will allow them to see everything! Even if you block them, they may still find a different way to engage with your content. How can you position yourself against such people? How can you disconnect from them?

Think and discuss: What concerns or hopes do you have regarding maintaining an Instagram account for your art?

Creating a list of mood-maps of concerns and aspirations can help you make the right decisions about your Instagram account.

You are not alone with your feelings & experiences!

Different forms of content

You can use different formats to post content on Instagram. These are...

Post - A regular post consists of a single picture with a short piece of text as the caption. It's perfect for e.g. showing a specific art piece. In the caption you can write about the meaning behind it, what inspired you, or something completely else. Feel free to be creative here!

Carousel - A carousel post contains a slideshow of multiple pictures. It is great to share more extensive insights of e.g. an event that you attended, or to show progress pics of one of your works.

Reel - A reel is a short looping video. While reels take a bit more effort to create, they generally have the widest reach. Make sure to tell an interesting story, have a good 'hook' and make it visually appealing. You can add music, text, or voiceovers for that. The Instagram app has a built-in video editor that can help you get started right away. Use reels to show the different stages of a work in progress or to give vivid insights to an event.

Story - A story is a picture or short video that your followers can access by tapping on your profile picture. Anything you add to your story will disappear after 24 hours, unless you add it to a 'highlight'. Stories are great for many things, including making announcements and sending short updates to your followers.

Live Stream - You can livestream on Instagram so that viewers can interact with you in real-time via text chat. You could have people watch you create art or talk about other things that interest you.

Step-by-Step Guide

How to create an Instagram artist account

Step 1: Download the Instagram application from the App Store or Google Play. You can also use the web version on a PC in the browser.

Step 2: Open Instagram and tap on Create new account. Enter either your e-mail address or your phone number. A confirmation code will be sent there, so make sure you can access it.

Step 3: Enter the confirmation code you received.

Step 4: Choose a password. Make sure it's a strong one that only you can know.

Step 5: Enter your birthday. Instagram needs it to determine whether you're an adult or a minor. Answer truthfully!

Step 6: Type in your name and create a username. Your username can be completely different than your real name, but has to be unique. If an account with your username or choice already exists, think of a different one.

Step 7: Read and accept Instagram's terms and use setting.

Step 8: Add a profile picture, if you want.

done!

Tip! You are good to go now. Try to explore the application. You can start by posting your profile, description, finding and following people, connecting with other artists or creating a first post!

Your turn! Plan your account

ask yourself... **How do you want to post?**

Account Type: You can choose between a private or public account. On **private**, only people you accept as "followers" can see your content. This gives you more control, but also means that new people cannot stumble over your account and your art. This limits your visibility. With a **public** account you are really "out there". Yet, this also makes you more traceable by officials and leaves you more prone to possible online discrimination or hate. If you feel confident enough and know what to post and what not to, and if you do not get bothered by trolls, the public account is a great choice. A good alternative would be a **mix**. Create a public account for greater visibility, but use it **selectively**. This would mean e.g. not showing your face or giving any other form of private information.

Who do you want to reach?

Target Group: Before posting, you should define who your desired audience is. Is it family and friends? Is it the broader public? English speaking or another language? How to art or artists themselves? All of this will have an influence on the following final question...

What do you want to post?

Creating Content: You are completely free in your choice of content. It could be pictures from an artwork, an image of you drawing, a short reel of an event you attended, a creation-process video, or simply you talking to the camera about your motivation to make art and whatever else moves you. But of course: Only if you feel comfortable with showing your face. Otherwise: Simply talk or film something else while including your audio or subtitles. Just explore and get creative with it!

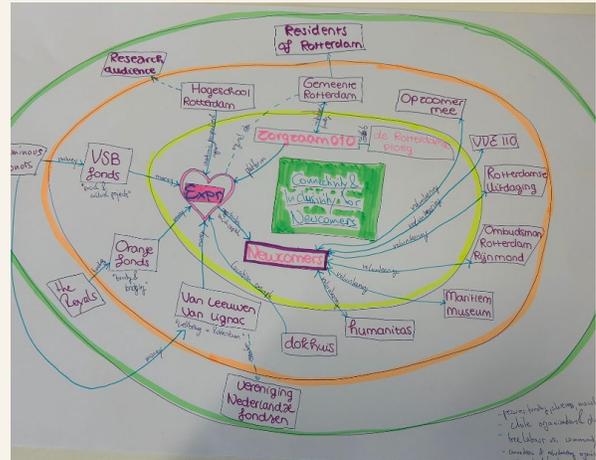
Your account is only what you make of it!

To download the brochure visit
www.translocalives.com/resources

PROJECT 3

Strengthening Digital Presence and Community Engagement: An Outreach Campaign

Lastly, students partnered with **ExPR** to develop an **outreach campaign to strengthen digital presence and community engagement**. This project aimed to enhance ExPR’s visibility among newcomers in Rotterdam by clarifying its mission and expanding its digital reach. Through two months of research the students identified key challenges such as a lack of a clear entry point for new members, limited external awareness of ExPR’s mission, and the need for a stronger online presence to reach a more diverse audience. Their proposed campaign outlined strategic messaging, digital outreach methods, and engagement tools to better connect with newcomers and external partners. This campaign plays a crucial role in capacity-building, equipping ExPR with a foundation to expand its network and improve migrant resilience through digital community-building strategies.



Students Lui and Hanneke developed a Stakeholder Mapping as part of their research activities.

OUTREACH CAMPAIGN

EXPR as a network shows great potential to reach more newcomers in Rotterdam. We propose the following outreach campaign in 5 steps that can help EXPR reach its potential.

1. Clearly define ExPR
2. Set up social media accounts
3. Introduction posts
4. Take Overs
5. In-person event

1. DEFINE EXPR

Before EXPR can reach out to expand to more newcomer groups in Rotterdam, we advise EXPR to clearly internally define itself as a network or community. According to the academic literature, a clear shared goal helps sustain migrant networks (Fransing & It will therefore be beneficial for EXPR to clearly define and communicate this goal or vision.

- Is EXPR a network or a community? Does that make a difference?
- As a network: what does EXPR mean by being a network? What are the goals and motivations of members of the network?
- As a community: what is the basis of the community? What do the community members share/have in common?

2. SET UP SOCIAL MEDIA

Newcomers need to be able to learn about EXPR and the resources and connections EXPR offers. For this to be possible, there is a need for a diversity of channels on which EXPR is present. While EXPR is already accessible at various points through personal networks, providing more newcomers can learn about and find EXPR resources will help EXPR take the next step. We suggest the setting up of a digital presence on social media.

Which platforms should EXPR choose?

We propose to take into account:

1. which platforms EXPR members and organizers are already familiar with
2. which platforms are being used by newcomers in their neighborhood

Step 1 will give insights into step 2. Prioritizing platforms that newcomers are already familiar with will allow EXPR to build on existing skills among newcomers, make it easier to start with, and allow EXPR to leverage existing social networks of newcomers.

How to set up accounts?

1. Create the accounts
 - <https://www.facebook.com/EXPRrotterdam/>

3. INTRODUCTION POST

An essential part of the setting up of accounts is ensuring that people who visit the account for the first time understand who EXPR is.

An Introduction Post should

1. Explain the EXPR vision/short goal
2. Explain who the members are & who is welcome to join
3. Communicate

4. TAKE OVER

The Academic literature and our research show several aspects that are important to include considering EXPR's target audience. A social media take over strategy allows EXPR to address each aspect.

What is a take-over campaign?

It is a take-over campaign, the person responsible for the social media output regularly changes (e.g. every week/month). It allows followers to meet different members, learn about how different members understand EXPR, their experiences in EXPR, and establish social familiarity with members.

Show ExPR's diversity

Different members taking over means that people interested see the true diversity of the content. Each take over will show how another person, maybe from a different cultural background, with different skills and different language, different experience EXPR, representing EXPR's true diversity, including newcomers talking about how they experience the diversity will help.

Show ExPR's diversity

- Newcomers to gain trust in the network
- Host welcome events if their identity is not represented yet

Different languages

Encourage Newcomers to share texts:

- in Dutch and
- their language of origin
- and talk about their Dutch language learning journey.

We will make about Newcomers feel welcomed even when they only speak about their skills.

Events

Share both formal and informal parts of events.

- Encourage newcomers in their takeover to talk about how they experience each part.

Newcomers passionate about contributing to EXPR organizing have an avenue to do so

We know from our research that members of EXPR want to contribute to EXPR if finding it. This is an easy way to allow newcomers to contribute to EXPR and take over responsibility in a small, temporary way that can be repeated.

This also means that the workload for the campaign can be split among members of the network.

WHAT STUDENTS SAY ABOUT THIS PROJECT

In three words, how would you describe your experience working with stakeholders?

Challenging, intriguing, rewarding

Student presentation of the Outreach Campaign.

By translating academic research into practical, stakeholder-oriented resources, these projects reflect the *Partners in Practice's* goal of **bridging scholarly knowledge with real-world application** while addressing specific stakeholder needs.

Whether through a toolkit for employers, a social media guide for newcomer artists, or an outreach campaign for a migrant network, each output demonstrates how research can be made **accessible and actionable**. At the same time, these projects highlight the opportunities and challenges of integrating academic work into practice, emphasizing the need to balance research depth, stakeholder expectations, and practical implementation.

Moreover, the applicability of **these outputs extends beyond the course**, as stakeholders can adapt and implement them within their organizations, ensuring that the initiative's impact continues beyond the pilot.

Feedback

A key aspect of evaluating the Partners in Practice initiative was gathering feedback from both students and stakeholders **to assess its impact, identify strengths, and pinpoint areas for improvement.** This initiative was designed to bridge academic learning with real-world engagement, and reflections from participants provide valuable insights into how effectively these goals were met. During the pilot, feedback was gathered from two groups of participants:

Student feedback sheds light on their learning experience, the challenges they faced, and the skills they developed while working on migration-related projects. Their perspectives highlight the benefits of experiential learning, as well as the need for structured support in stakeholder collaboration and workload management.

Stakeholder feedback, on the other hand, offers insight into the practical relevance of student contributions and the effectiveness of the collaboration process. Their reflections help determine whether the initiative successfully addressed real-world migration challenges and how future partnerships can be strengthened to create more impactful outcomes.

By incorporating these perspectives, this section aims to provide a balanced evaluation of the initiative, ensuring that future iterations can build on its successes while addressing areas for refinement.

Feedback from Students

The *Partners in Practice* initiative was highly valued by students, particularly for its **hands-on approach and real-world engagement**. Overall, students found that working with stakeholders significantly **enhanced their research skills, professional communication, and ability to translate academic insights into actionable outputs**. However, they also highlighted challenges related to time constraints, stakeholder availability, and workload management.

Strengths: Gaining Practical and Professional Skills

One of the most appreciated aspects of the initiative was the opportunity to work on real-world migration challenges. All students rated stakeholder collaboration as engaging (5/5), with many emphasizing how **this experience deepened their understanding of migration issues**. As one student put it, *“Real-world cases and actually helping people made the experience incredibly rewarding.”*

The initiative also helped students develop valuable **professional skills**, particularly in stakeholder communication and translating academic research into practical applications. Students described **learning how to make their research more accessible and relevant**, with one stating, *“Bringing scientific knowledge into something tangible and applicable was a key takeaway.”* Another noted the importance of effective communication, explaining, *“The biggest skill I gained was learning how to communicate research findings in a way that makes sense for external audiences.”*

Additionally, students appreciated the structured interactions with stakeholders, which provided valuable insights into real-

world needs and constraints. One student highlighted the benefits of frequent updates and discussions, stating, *“A lot of constant communication and updates helped keep the process clear and productive.”*

Challenges: Time Constraints and Stakeholder Engagement

Despite these strengths, some students experienced difficulties balancing coursework with stakeholder collaboration. When asked about the main challenges during the pilot, **time management** emerged as a common theme, with one student stating *“I felt like there wasn’t enough time to fully develop everything we wanted.”* Another student suggested that fewer overall **research assignments** could improve future iterations, noting, *“While I understand the value of the academic work, it became overwhelming alongside the stakeholder project.”* In the same line, another student touched on the importance of **better coordination with other courses** to help manage workload: *“Planning and coordination with other courses was challenging, so better scheduling could help future students handle the workload more effectively.”*

The availability and responsiveness of stakeholders also posed some challenges. One student shared, *“The stakeholder did not have enough time for the project, which sometimes slowed things down.”* Another expressed difficulty navigating **stakeholder expectations**, particularly in terms of balancing their input with academic requirements.

Overall Enthusiasm for Real-World Learning

Despite the challenges, students overwhelmingly supported **incorporating more real-world collaboration into their**

academic programs. All respondents expressed enthusiasm for similar initiatives, with one stating, *“This type of projects prepare us better for the professional world.”* Another reinforced this point, saying, *“This is a good way to get out of the academic bubble and apply what we learn to real-world situations.”*

Overall, the feedback underscores the immense value of **experiential learning**, while also highlighting areas where future iterations could provide **stronger structural support** to maximize student success.

Feedback from Stakeholders

Gathering feedback from stakeholders was a crucial component in evaluating the impact and effectiveness of the *Partners in Practice* initiative. Stakeholders provided insights into the **practical relevance of student contributions, the challenges of working within an academic framework, and the overall effectiveness of the collaboration.** Their perspectives shed light on the benefits of academic partnerships in addressing migration-related challenges while also highlighting areas for improvement.

Perceived Value of the Collaboration

Stakeholders found the collaboration valuable in advancing their organizational goals. Responses were overwhelmingly positive, with stakeholders rating the initiative between 4 and 5 on a scale of 1 to 5. This high rating underscores the perceived impact of the students’ contributions in bringing **fresh perspectives and research-based solutions** to real-world migration challenges.

Several stakeholders emphasized that students approached the work with professionalism and dedication. One noted, *“The students worked very seriously; they were involved and professional.”* Another highlighted the **value of academic insights** in refining their organizational strategies, stating, *“The academic knowledge gives a better understanding of our work in the field.”*

Challenges and Areas for Improvement

Despite positive feedback, stakeholders pointed out areas for improvement. One recurring theme was the **need for more in-person engagement** throughout the project. Stakeholders suggested that in-person meetings would enhance communication and understanding of project expectations. *“It would be nice if the organization and the students could meet multiple times.”* This suggests that incorporating key in-person moments alongside virtual collaboration might enhance engagement.

Overall Assessment

Despite the challenges, stakeholders expressed strong support for the initiative and its potential for future collaborations. When asked whether they would recommend participating in similar programs, all stakeholders responded positively, reinforcing **the value of academic partnerships** in addressing migration-related challenges.

The feedback confirms that the *Partners in Practice* initiative **successfully fostered meaningful collaboration** between academia and societal partners.

Lessons Learned

The *Partners in Practice* initiative offered valuable insights into the opportunities and challenges of integrating real-world stakeholder collaboration into academic settings. As a pilot project, it provided a testing ground for bridging theoretical learning with practical application, equipping students with hands-on experience while supporting migration-focused organizations.

This section reflects on the key takeaways from the initiative, identifying strengths that contributed to its success and areas that require refinement for future iterations. Key lessons include the importance of aligning institutional frameworks with external partnerships, managing stakeholder

expectations, balancing academic rigor with practical impact, and ensuring sustainable engagement beyond the pilot phase. Additionally, reflections from students and stakeholders highlight the transformative potential of experiential learning while underscoring the need for structured guidance and institutional support to enhance outcomes.

By examining these lessons, we can refine future practice-based initiatives, ensuring they remain effective, impactful, and sustainable for both students and stakeholders alike.



TAKE AWAY 1

The Impact of Institutional Alignment

Integrating the *Partners in Practice* initiative within an existing research workshop required significant structural adjustments to the course. These changes impacted learning objectives, activities, and workload distribution for students, necessitating a careful **balance between the initiative's goals and the academic priorities** of the master's specialization *Media, Culture and Society*. Aligning with program coordination early in the process was crucial to ensuring that the initiative complemented rather than disrupted the course framework. This experience highlighted the need for **clear communication, strategic planning, and institutional flexibility** when embedding external partnerships into academic curricula. Future iterations could benefit from stronger coordination mechanisms, such as pre-established guidelines for incorporating stakeholder collaborations into coursework as well as more flexibility for adjustments to the course's assessment structure to better reflect the applied nature of the work and mitigate potential friction between all parts involved.

TAKE AWAY 2

Managing Stakeholder Expectations and Time Constraints

Collaboration with external partners introduced new dynamics that required careful expectation management. While stakeholders brought valuable real-

world challenges, their expectations regarding **project scope, student deliverables, and timelines** sometimes diverged from what was feasible within the course structure. Establishing clear communication channels from the outset, defining achievable goals, and setting realistic boundaries were essential to ensuring mutually beneficial outcomes. However, this process was also time-consuming—coordinating meetings, aligning expectations, and integrating stakeholder feedback required significant effort from both the management team and students. Future initiatives should incorporate structured **onboarding sessions for stakeholders**, clarifying their role, the students' capabilities, and the constraints of an academic setting to enhance alignment and cooperation. Additionally, allocating dedicated time in the course schedule for stakeholder interactions and feedback loops could help manage workload more effectively and prevent last-minute pressures.

TAKE AWAY 3

Balancing Academic Rigor with Practical Impact: The Role of Science Communication

The initiative aimed to bridge academic learning with societal impact, but this balance was at times challenging to maintain. While students gained valuable hands-on experience, ensuring that their work met both scholarly and practical standards required careful structuring of assignments and evaluation criteria. Some students expressed the need for

additional time and support in translating their research into actionable outputs for stakeholders. A key takeaway was the relevance of Science Communication in this process. Many students were unfamiliar with how to present their research in ways that were accessible and useful to non-academic audiences. **The workshop on Science Communication helped equip them with strategies for simplifying complex findings, using engaging formats, and tailoring their outputs to stakeholder needs.** However, further integration of Science Communication training—such as dedicated mentorship sessions or iterative feedback rounds—could enhance students' ability to translate research into meaningful real-world applications. Future iterations should explore incorporating more structured guidance on communication strategies to ensure that academic work can be effectively leveraged for societal impact.

TAKE AWAY 4

Sustainability, Institutional Support, and the Potential Role of the Professional Advisory Committee (PAC)

One of the key takeaways was the importance of designing initiatives with **long-term sustainability** in mind. While *Partners in Practice* successfully facilitated collaboration between students and stakeholders, ensuring continuity beyond the pilot phase requires **ongoing institutional support**. Establishing formal partnerships, securing stable funding,

and integrating similar projects into the broader curriculum could help sustain and expand the initiative's impact. In this regard, the **Professional Advisory Committee (PAC) could play a crucial role in strengthening the initiative's long-term viability.** As an advisory body that connects the educational programs within the **Media & Communication** department (M&C) to the professional field, PAC can provide valuable guidance on aligning coursework with industry needs, fostering stronger links between students and external stakeholders, and ensuring that initiatives like *Partners in Practice* remain relevant and responsive to changing professional demands. By working closely with PAC, future iterations of the initiative could benefit from insights into field trends, potential partnerships, and strategies for embedding real-world engagement into the curriculum more effectively. Additionally, PAC's network could serve as a valuable resource for expanding collaborations with new stakeholders, thereby **increasing opportunities for students** to engage with diverse professional contexts.

TAKE AWAY 5

Strengthening Student Engagement with Stakeholders

Despite the challenges, the initiative demonstrated the **immense value of experiential learning**. Students not only applied their theoretical knowledge to pressing migration issues but also developed **professional skills, built networks, and gained a sense of social responsibility**. Many reported increased confidence in their ability to conduct stakeholder-oriented research and saw

the experience as a bridge to future career opportunities. This underscores the potential of embedding more **practice-oriented learning experiences** within academic programs to enhance both student growth and societal impact. To further enhance this experience, future iterations could provide clearer guidance on stakeholder communication, helping students navigate expectations, structure inquiries, and effectively present their research. Structured workshops, mentoring sessions, or practical templates could better prepare them for professional interactions and ensure that their outputs align more closely with stakeholder needs. Strengthening this aspect would maximize both student learning and the real-world applicability of their work.

The event allowed them to receive direct feedback, refine their communication skills, and build confidence in discussing their findings with diverse audiences. Beyond individual learning, the symposium fostered **meaningful exchanges between students, stakeholders, and the broader university community**. Future iterations could enhance this event by expanding participation, incorporating panel discussions, or inviting additional professionals to strengthen networking opportunities. Recognizing the symposium as a **key moment of engagement with potential impact** will help ensure that students fully appreciate the societal relevance of their work.

TAKE AWAY 6

The Final Symposium as a Key Moment of Impact

The final symposium played a crucial role in bridging academic work and real-world engagement. By presenting their outputs to stakeholders, students not only showcased their research but also **experienced firsthand how their work contributed** to migration-related challenges.

Conclusions

The *Partners in Practice* initiative successfully integrated real-world stakeholder collaboration into the Media and Migration course, providing students with an opportunity to apply their research in meaningful ways. Through partnerships with NGOs and grassroots organizations, students translated academic insights into practical outputs, addressing challenges related to migration, digital inclusion, and community engagement.

The initiative underscored both the value and complexity of bridging academia with practice. Students developed professional skills, engaged with diverse stakeholders, and contributed to solutions for migration-related issues, yet also faced challenges such as workload management, stakeholder

coordination, and balancing academic rigor with applied work. Feedback from participants highlighted the impact of experiential learning, while also offering insights into how future iterations can provide more structured guidance and institutional support.

Moving forward, strengthening institutional alignment, refining stakeholder collaboration, and ensuring sustainability will be key to maximizing the long-term impact of the initiative. The pilot demonstrated the potential of integrating hands-on, practice-oriented learning into academic programs, offering a model for how universities can foster socially engaged research and education that benefits both students and the communities they serve.

Partners in Practice is an initiative developed by:



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