



**DigiEduHack Solution**  
**Bologna - Shaping a proactive and creative human capital's culture**  
**Challenge: Bologna - Shaping a proactive and creative human capital's culture Challenge 2021**

**Decentralized platform for promoting inclusion, engagement, diversity and cross-cultural exchange.**



**Mate is an inclusive platform for university students.**

Mate is an online community where students from different nationalities and universities can interact with one another. Mate app is a social platform that promotes a wide range of activities held both in online format and in presence.

**Team: Team Mate**

**Team members**

Adekiya Adewale, Ayoubi Khaled, Bouira Aicha, Dhanrajani Disha

**Members roles and background**

Khaled Ayoubi:

A master student in Business Management at the University of Applied Management Studies (Hochschule der Wirtschaft für Management, HdWM) in Mannheim, Germany. The main focus during the master degree is Marketing and Sales, and therefore I would take the marketing role.

Disha Dhanrajani:

My name is Disha Dhanrajani. I am studying computer science at the Gujarat Technological University. I am from a computer science background so I can help in making apps. I can also

help in finalizing Agreements with universities and local partners in my country.

Adewale Adekiya: Affiliation: Bayero University, Kano, Nigeria. Background: Bachelor of Science in Industrial Psychology, Master in Business administration (MBA) Master of Science in Management (M.Sc), Doctor of Philosophy (Management).

Aicha Bouira: Business Management second year student that is always eager to challenge herself and learn by doing through new experiences. She has a coordinator role in the team. Apart from her academic career, she took part to various initiatives:

1)GSEM International Autumn School 2020, this seminar was an opportunity to work with other students from different European universities on a project for a local competition (her team won it), and a chance to meet representatives of international companies and get to know their business activity from an insider perspective.

2)Startup Creation Lab 2021, a competition where she presented with her team a project on realizing experiences based on museum's themes for elementary school students, by using gamification.

3)E-Business Plan Lab 2021, an online seminar where she learnt how to write a professional and comprehensive business plan.

### **Contact details**

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## **Solution Details**

### **Solution description**

Mate is a multicultural platform that allows university students to unleash their personal and professional potential by taking part in the activities promoted on it.

For this, the platform delivers to its users various workshops, seminars, and entertaining events. These activities are organized by our partners, which are universities, businesses and cultural centers, and the events may be held online or in-presence, in different languages.

The activities we choose to promote are those that help the student develop and strengthen the soft and hard skills required by the job market on one hand, and get to know other cultures and languages on the other.

Another way Mate achieves this ambitious objective and to increase user engagement is by giving users the ability to create customized and thematic discussion groups that can start from participation to challenges.

Thus, online challenges are designed for the users to participate in teams, to win special prizes delivered by our sponsors.

The scope of these challenges is to increase the users' awareness on important matters like sustainable economy, environmental issues and global citizenship.

The users may also get in contact with each other through private chats to develop a network of friendships with colleagues worldwide. In fact, the access to the platform is open to university students anywhere.

The users may decide to sign in without paying any subscription fee and register to free events. If instead the user is willing to try premium experiences, he/she can do that in exchange of a small monthly subscription fee.

The success of the solution can be measured by the following KPIs:

-Direct: number of active users, number of contributing partners, average time spent on the platform, reviews about the app, number of registrations to the activities provided our partners on the platform.

-Indirect: number of new students admission based on recommendations by current platform members, number of universities who join the community.

Moreover, the challenge owner (University of Bologna), has expressed an interest to help advertize the platform. But it's important to highlight that the app's utility goes beyond the single university.

## **Solution context**

Our personal experience, as students from different universities, made us conscious that the current tools we dispose of are not sufficient to help us try experiences in international contexts.

For example, in Nigeria there is no virtual community that enables students, lecturers and researchers in Nigerian universities to link up with their colleagues in other parts of the world, in Italy mostly universities provide seminars and workshops hosted only locally, while from a European perspective Erasmus+ is efficient for abroad opportunities but not for virtual experiences.

Moreover, the EPRS document of September 2020 "The future of tertiary education in Europe" highlighted six challenges from which we identified four (maintaining relevance to current and future aspirations, collaboration with business and improving global and intra-EU collaboration) that reflect the SDGs targets number 4.7, 8.6 and 17.6, which our solution addresses.

Finally, the difficulties encountered by exchange students to integrate in the host countries are worth mentioning, as highlighted by the report "Student Exchanges in Times of Crisis - ESN research report on the Impact of COVID-19".

We believe that the current constraints impact negatively on knowledge sharing and the creativity of most university students.

Thus, for us Mate platform is an efficient means to connect students and lecturers from worldwide universities and significantly improve their cross-cultural learning, knowledge sharing, innovation and proactive culture.

## **Solution target group**

Our target is universities' students of all ages who would like to expand their experiences. Students through our app "Mate" can gain better soft and hard skills that would be useful for their personal and career lives.

Mate can give the opportunity to students to have a better understanding of other cultures, know many people from different backgrounds, and be able to participate in educational events where their personalities and skills can flourish.

Our ideal customer is a student, who is 18 years or older and is enrolled at a university. We are targeting students in different languages, but our main spoken language of our users is English since it is the most common and is spoken by most students. Of course, users, both students and locals, can interact with whatever language they prefer, and we encourage the students to interact with locals in the country's official language for better integration in the foreign country.

We plan to reach as many international students as possible to join our platform to make their abroad experiences unforgettable. For sure, local students are as important, because without them international students would not have the experience that we want them to have. Engagement of users can be reached through:

- Publicity of important events (concerning university students' interests) that users may join through our app and gain benefits (as being Mate members).
- lives/videos/stories on social media in which we (or our partner influencers) try our virtual assistant in different situations and locations to show its usefulness.
- partnerships with some influential people in academic fields that may organize seminars for our users (online or live seminars). We are going to use their public image as a marketing strategy.

## **Solution impact**

Our project would provide a positive impact on different stakeholders:

- 1)Exchange students: they will feel more confident in visiting foreign countries, since they'll find a local community of colleagues that support them to foster their integration, and they'll be guided to discover the host city thanks to a wide range of entertaining events held in presence and promoted on the app.
- 2)Local students will be able to try new experiences, also in an online format, thus it will be easier for them to get in touch with foreign colleagues and discover new cultures, opportunities and boost their CV by learning new competences.
- 3)Event providers: they'll be given the opportunity to widen their public and to offer targeted experiences to university students.
- 4)Employers: the workforce in the job market will be able to match the skills they require, since Mate app is also an opportunity for businesses to promote their seminars for university students.
- 5)Local communities worldwide: Mate app fosters their improvement by promoting cultural understanding and cultural intelligence among the global student community.

Overall, by joining Mate platform, university students would improve their knowledge sharing and ultimately their creativity and innovation.

The impact of our solution could be measured through the above mentioned KPIs and the following indicators that identify the different levels of collaborations between international students:

1)number of student exchanges among global universities.

2)number of international conferences attended by students and lecturers from different universities.

## **Solution tweet text**

Mate platform is dedicated to support all university students to grow both on the professional and social side along with their academic careers, through a variety of experiences that aim to help them discover and unlock greater potential,in a multicultural and inclusive context.

## **Solution innovativeness**

The innovativeness of our platform is that Mate is the first app where worldwide university students are brought together in one international virtual community, as LinkedIn for workers.

Also, the platform is willing to give equal opportunities for all its users, thus the online activities are designed to be accessible to everyone, no matter the location.

Moreover, the users' journey on the platform is a totally personalized experience, since the integrated AI system suggests to them the right experience they need to try, based on their interests, academic career and feelings.

Lastly, our core value is diversity. We believe efficient development of competencies can happen only by confrontation with different opinions, ideas, and backgrounds.

Thus, Mate fosters diversity by promoting a wide range of events worldwide.

There are few direct competitors to our business, as Mate is targeting only university students to offer them online experiences and services that may help them when they travel abroad, and also to communicate and learn with each other outside the walls of their universities.

Similar efforts are done just by the individual universities, which from time to time offer their students webinars or studying abroad opportunities, Facebook and Instagram channels and pages by some organizations, and by the Erasmus program, which yet mainly offers real-life experiences.

Another competitor is Meetup, which is a platform for finding and building local communities. People use Meetup to meet new people, learn new things, find support, get out of their comfort zones, and pursue their passions together. The difference between Meetup and Mate is that Mate has the unique advantage of targeting a specific category of people (university students) with a tailored service for their necessities.

## **Solution transferability**

Our solution can be easily adopted by different universities and countries across the world. Since it is a completely online platform, only digital means are needed to access it, and it will be easier for us to build a network of partnerships and collaborations with universities, businesses and cultural centres across the world to widen the range of opportunities we offer to our users.

The platform is easy to navigate and available in many languages. Through our simple icons, students will not have any problems with using the app.

Moreover, since our service is a decentralized platform, the content creation will be up to our partners, who're going to use our platform as a targeted channel of promotion for their activities by registering on Mate website as "business partners" and then adding their events through a specific form.

Afterwards, our registered partners will be able to monitor the performance of their activities through the analytics tool integrated in the website.

Agreements with universities will be needed also to gain the permission to use the institutional emails of their students as a means of identification during the registration process, and to establish a transparent privacy policy in order to protect the data of our users.

Local universities would thus have the opportunity of adapting this platform to their specific context, and from this local platform students can strive to connect with an international community, after getting approval as a member of the local community.

An advantage of such a strategy is that it would be impossible for non-students to make use of the platform since its usage would be based on an approval from and an identification by the local university community.

This feature is already implemented by eduroam (Education Roaming) and we intend to replicate it in our platform.

## **Solution sustainability**

Our road map to realize the projects is set on a three-years-prospect:

1) In the first year, there will be the creation of the mock-app, business plan and executive summary. We plan on reaching a good proof of concept, in order to gather expressions of interest from many potential partners, like universities, businesses and cultural centres. The DigiEduHack prize will be invested for the creation of the startup.

2) In the second year, there will be the App beta version building and launching, thanks to a round of seed funding that we will start to reach 260.000€, the necessary sum needed to build the app and its website. Agreements with universities and local partners (Germany, Italy, France, Russia, Nigeria, India) for testing our solution will be settled, and the testing phase will begin.

3) In the third year, we will set up a strategy of expansion in the initial countries with the highest level of user engagement, in order to become a highly recommended app for university students. We will also consider strengthening our partnerships with local and online event providers, to widen the offer in the platform. Our main objective is to have a fully working system that will allow us to reach about 40,000 active users by the end of the year.

## **Solution team work**

This project was proposed by two team members and gained the interest of the others. Each team member pointed out the current problems in his/her country and gave advice on how to make this idea solve the general problems. Together the team assembled all the proposals into the final solution, which reflects the vision that the team has on creating an international and inclusive community of university students, where they can build a network of friendships and grow on the personal and professional side, by taking part in exclusive experiences.

Our team's competences are complementary and close to our project needs, since our backgrounds of study are mainly related to computer science and economics.

Given the relevance of the problems addressed and the positive impact that this idea would have, all the team members are committed to bring to reality their solution, thus they definitely agree on continuing to work together in the future.

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