



Winter-  
semester  
2020/2021

# THE LARGER PICTURE

Newsletter international und interkulturell

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## Spending an inspiring autumn virtually with the University of Twente: Connecting students and society via the Autumn Challenge programme

By Elena Tsigki, Project Leader of the CuriousU Summer School and the Autumn Challenge programme, University of Twente

Looking back at 2020 we can all agree that one of the main highlights was online education, online teaching and trying to connect to people. Offering online education was a challenge for many reasons, the obvious one being the lack of contact with other people. At the University of Twente we really took it to heart to make sure that our students were supported and remained connected throughout this transition. Some students could not go on exchange, some had to start their first year without being in a real classroom and some had to continue their studies from their home countries, missing out the real international experience as we traditionally know it. We felt we had to come up with a good idea to still connect people through education and offer them a space where they can still learn from each other. This is where the [Autumn Challenge programme](#) came to existence.

### What is the Autumn Challenge?

The Autumn Challenge programme is a unique, alternative international experience organised by the University of Twente and powered by ECIU University. The main theme of this programme is “smart resilient and happy communities”, a topic of great importance for everyone. This is an extracurricular short term programme aimed at engaged learners with a vision to make a change in their communities and regions. What is so special about the Autumn Challenge is that it offers the opportunity to students (mainly from European Universities) to come together in an international, collaborative and digital environment to work on a real-life challenge and co-develop solutions with challenge providers and external stakeholders. Participants have the possibility to make real impact through education and offer creative solutions and insights to big problems and challenges that trouble our society and at the same learn from each other. To achieve this we use the Challenge-Based Learning (CBL) framework, an approach via which students are asked to identify big ideas, ask difficult and “wicked” questions, that eventually lead to solving challenges. This new approach really added a new dimension to the Autumn Challenge programme and made online collaboration possible between students.

### The Autumn Challenge Experience

The programme launched on the 1st of October 2020 with a total duration of 12 weeks. For this first edition, 40 students from European Universities were admitted based on their motivation and drive to become actors of change in their communities. The students come from multidisciplinary backgrounds and have different cultural backgrounds as well, which really adds up to the experience the students have. The programme is extracurricular, which means that most students are following this programme aside their normal studies; they invest quite a lot of time, however,

as the expected workload equals 5 ECTS. To make the programme interesting and intriguing, we developed 4 components:

1. Virtual Teams: group work on solving a pre-assigned challenge. The virtual teams are the main component of the programme, where students form teams to discuss and solve the challenge (case).
  2. Thematic Weekends: a combination of online lectures, workshops and webinars on topics related to social leadership, technology and society, smart cities, resilient communities and cities
  3. Skills Labs: skills development workshops on challenge-based learning, responsible design thinking, stakeholder management and civic engagement, intercultural competences and communication within international teams
  4. Cultural Activities: variety of extracurricular activities to stimulate intercultural skills and knowledge of other cultures
- These components come together and complement each other with the ultimate aim to enable students to connect, learn with and from one another and to work together to tackle their problem.

For the 2020 edition, 7 Virtual Teams were formed and were assigned [7 different challenges](#) on topics related to healthy communities, resilient communities, circularity and ageing population. These challenges are provided by external stakeholders mainly in the area of Enschede, the Netherlands, varying between the Municipality of Enschede and other local organisations. In their quest to analyse the challenge presented to them, the students really have to use their strengths, weaknesses, existing knowledge, their different disciplines and experiences to form a strong and functioning group and work together. Despite the fact that the programme is fully online, we have noticed that using the CBL approach has enabled the students to work together and connect. At the very end of the programme, students will have to pitch their solutions in front of a committee and upon successful completion they will receive a certificate. The final assessment moments will take place between the 12th and 14th of January 2021.

### Is this an alternative international experience?

There are a lot of innovative programmes aiming towards enabling the international experience for students, especially under the current circumstances where physical mobility is not possible or restricted. Programmes such as the Autumn Challenge can really provide a great opportunity for students to engage in a different type of international experience, in fact, that is why many of the participants chose this programme, one of them a Psychology student from the University of Muenster. We are really eager to hear more about our current students' experiences and inspiring more students to dare and seek for an alternative international experience.

### Want to know more about the Autumn Challenge?

If you want to know more about the Autumn Challenge, please visit our [website](#) or contact us via [autumn-challenge@utwente.nl](mailto:autumn-challenge@utwente.nl).



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## › AKTUELLES/NEWS

## Reisestipendium der Fulbright-Kommission für das Studium in den USA

**Bewerbung möglich bis zum 15. Februar 2021**

Deutsche Studierende der Bachelor- und Master-Programme, die im Studienjahr 2021–2022 für ein oder zwei Semester im Rahmen eines Austauschprogramms an einer Partnerhochschule der WWU in den USA studieren, können sich jetzt für ein Reisestipendium bewerben.

Die Stipendienleistungen beinhalten eine Reise- und Nebenkostenpauschale (2000 Euro).

Die Bewerbungsfrist endet am 15. Februar 2021.

Bewerbungsinformationen und Antragsunterlagen sind auf der Website der Fulbright-Kommission zu finden:

<https://www.fulbright.de/programs-for-germans/studierende-und-graduierte/reisestipendien>

Alle Bewerber\*innen reichen zusätzlich zur elektronischen Bewerbung bei der Fulbright-Kommission ihren vollständigen Stipendienantrag per Email in Form einer PDF-Datei bis zum 15. Februar 2021 (Eingangsdatum) beim International Office der WWU Münster ein, z.H. Frau Dr. Petra Hille, [petra.hille@uni-muenster.de](mailto:petra.hille@uni-muenster.de).

Die Mitteilung über die Stipendiennominierung erfolgt im April 2021 durch die Fulbright-Kommission in Berlin.

› Weitere Informationen finden Sie unter [www.fulbright.de](http://www.fulbright.de).

› KONTAKT | IMPRESSUM

Das Team des International Office unterstützt sowohl Studierende, die einen Teil ihrer Studien an einer Hochschule im Ausland absolvieren möchten, als auch Studierende, die aus dem Ausland für ihre Studien nach Deutschland an die WWU kommen. Wir betreuen die internationalen Austauschstudierenden, engagieren uns in der Internationalisierung von Studium und Lehre an der WWU und bieten allen Studierenden Raum zur internationalen Begegnung,

Freizeitgestaltung und Weiterbildung. Außerdem unterstützen wir auch international mobile Mitarbeiter\*innen der WWU.

Weitere Informationen finden Sie unter [www.uni-muenster.de/InternationalOffice](http://www.uni-muenster.de/InternationalOffice) oder kommen Sie direkt zu uns – sobald die Umstände es wieder erlauben.

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**Titelseitengestaltung  
und Gestaltungskonzept:**

goldmarie design

**Bildnachweis:**

shutterstock / Catarina Belova

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