



01 Migration, exile and refugees



02 Environmental transition



03 Democracy, inclusion and equality



04 Interculturality and multilingualism



05 Arts and edges

From societal challenges to social entrepreneurship

Social entrepreneurship begins with understanding a real societal need and finding a sustainable way to address it. Prepared as background material for the ERUA iDeaThon 2026, within the ERUA Challenge-to-Impact Initiative, this guide brings together challenges identified through more than 200 stakeholder interviews across the eight ERUA universities and their regional environments, documented in the MS6.1 report on social challenges and business opportunities. The following pages organise these findings around ERUA's five thematic areas: migration, exile and refugees; environmental transition; democracy and human rights, inclusion and gender equality; interculturality and multilingualism; and arts and edges. As a participant, you are invited to use this shared knowledge to identify a challenge that matters to you, understand the experiences of those affected, and explore how your skills and the knowledge and resources of the alliance could contribute to a viable social entrepreneurial response. These challenges offer starting points for your ideas, leaving room for creativity, connections across thematic areas, and responses to other needs identified in your own community.

Migration, exile and refugees

- 1.1 Access to suitable employment
- 1.2 Communication and access to information
- 1.3 Social integration and acceptance
- 1.4 Legal and administrative obstacles
- 1.5 Housing and financial support
- 1.6 Education and inclusion of migrant children
- 1.7 Protection of refugee children
- 1.8 Mental health and trauma
- 1.9 Inclusive receiving communities
- 1.10 Migration and demographic change

Migration, exile and refugees

If you choose this thematic area, your starting point is the difficulty people face in rebuilding their lives in a new country—and the pressures experienced by the communities receiving them. The ERUA report identifies barriers to suitable employment, recognition of qualifications, language learning, housing, education, and access to reliable information and essential services. It also highlights discrimination, administrative uncertainty, psychological trauma, and the particular protection needs of refugee children. Integration requires more than helping newcomers navigate procedures: it involves mutual understanding, opportunities to participate, and support that can continue beyond the initial emergency. Your idea could address one of these challenges by developing a service or product that improves everyday life, creates meaningful opportunities, or strengthens cooperation between newcomers and local residents. Consider whose specific need you would meet, involve those people in shaping the response, and explain how your initiative could sustain its social contribution.

THEMATIC AREA 2 / 5

Environmental transition

- 2.1 Climate adaptation and resilience
- 2.2 Environmental evidence for decisions
- 2.3 Natural-resource protection
- 2.4 Pollution, waste, and circularity
- 2.5 Accessible sustainable production and consumption
- 2.6 Energy transition
- 2.7 Skills and a socially just transition
- 2.8 Environmental awareness and participation
- 2.9 Sustainable places and institutions
- 2.10 Food sovereignty
- 2.11 Inclusive access to nature and nature-based livelihoods

Based on the MS6.1 report • Consolidated challenge inventory

THEMATIC AREA 2 / 5

Environmental transition

If you choose environmental transition, consider how communities can protect their environment while maintaining livelihoods, affordable services, and opportunities for participation. The ERUA report connects climate adaptation with water scarcity, soil erosion, pollution, waste, energy costs, food sovereignty, and changing conditions for agriculture and tourism. It also identifies gaps in environmental monitoring, green and digital skills, public awareness, and access to sustainable solutions, particularly for smaller businesses. Transition can create social difficulties when industries close or new practices remain unaffordable, so the challenge is also to ensure that people can take part in the changes affecting them. Your idea could help a community conserve resources, adopt circular practices, improve environmental decisions, or develop an inclusive nature-based activity. Start with a concrete environmental problem and show how your response would deliver both environmental benefits and a financially sustainable social purpose.

Source: ERUA MS6.1 report, 31 October 2024 | Section B
Consolidated challenges and participant-facing descriptions

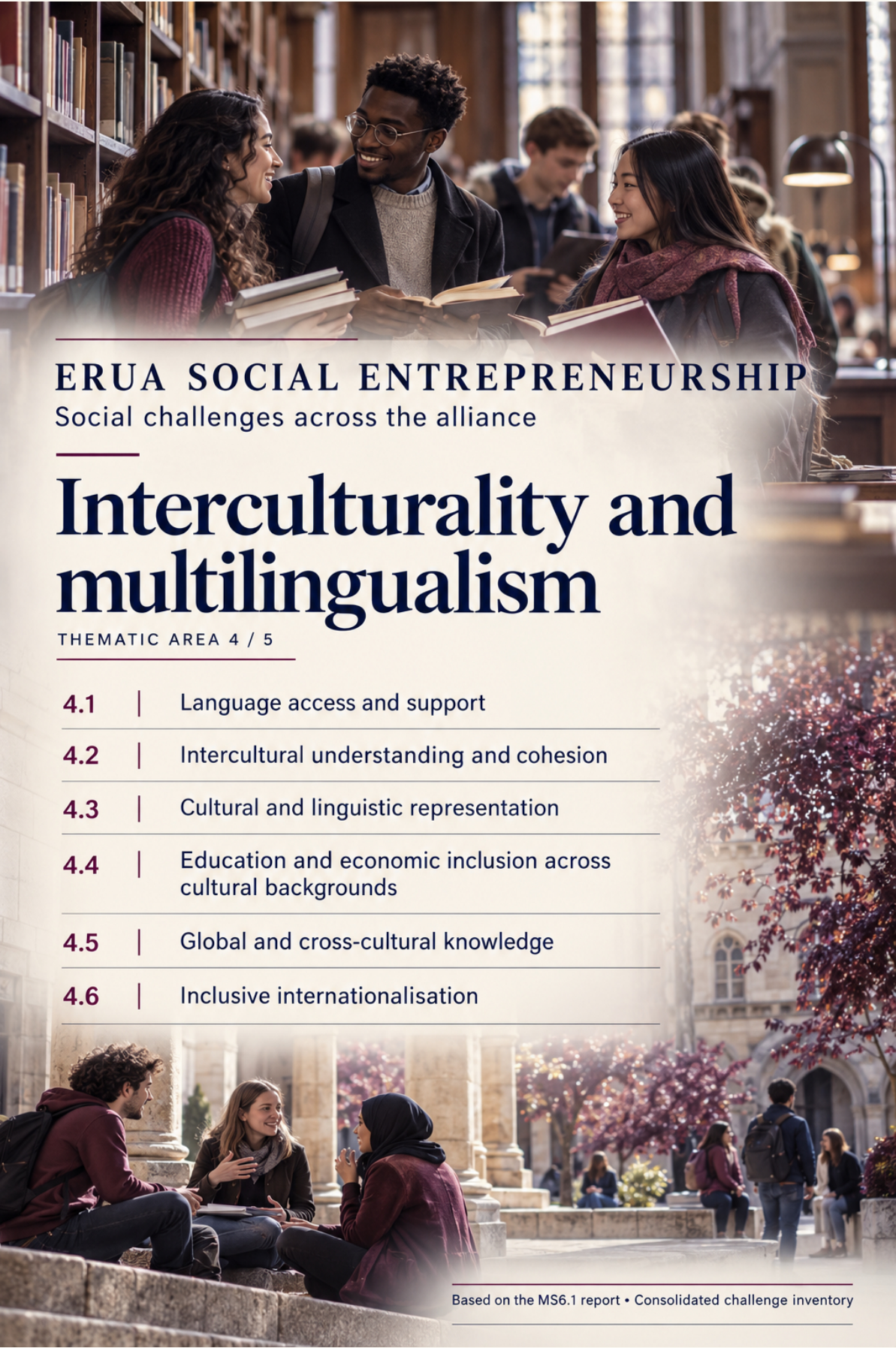
Democracy and human rights, inclusion and gender equality

- 3.1 Discrimination and exclusion
- 3.2 Disability inclusion and accessibility
- 3.3 Education and essential skills
- 3.4 Youth pathways into employment
- 3.5 Workforce and enterprise continuity
- 3.6 Ageing, care, and loneliness
- 3.7 Healthcare and mental health
- 3.8 Gender equality and economic participation
- 3.9 Violence and reproductive health
- 3.10 Poverty, housing, and essential services
- 3.11 Depopulation and regional attractiveness
- 3.12 Democratic participation and institutional capacity
- 3.13 Sustainable community support
- 3.14 Reuse and preservation of buildings

Based on the MS6.1 report • Consolidated challenge inventory

Democracy and human rights, inclusion and gender equality

If you choose this thematic area, focus on what prevents people from participating equally in society and accessing the support they need. The ERUA report identifies discrimination, inaccessible education and infrastructure, limited employment prospects, gender inequalities, violence, and barriers to healthcare and reproductive support. It also draws attention to ageing, loneliness, care responsibilities, poverty, housing insecurity, depopulation, and the difficulties facing young people outside education or employment. Alongside these everyday needs are challenges of democratic participation, institutional trust, and the continuity of community initiatives. Your idea could improve an essential service, remove a barrier to participation, support a disadvantaged group, or bring an unused building into community use. Identify a manageable problem within this broad field, listen to the people affected, and explain how your initiative would strengthen their independence, rights, or opportunities while securing the resources needed to continue.



Interculturality and multilingualism

If you choose interculturality and multilingualism, explore how differences in language and cultural background can become a basis for cooperation while addressing the barriers they can create. The ERUA report identifies difficulties communicating in education, employment, and public services; insufficient language support; cultural misunderstandings; and limited representation of minority languages and identities. It also highlights unequal educational and economic opportunities, gaps in knowledge of other societies, and internationalisation support that does not adequately reach smaller enterprises or certain countries. Your idea could make communication more accessible, support learning across cultures, give underrepresented voices greater visibility, or help people and organisations establish meaningful international connections. Think beyond translation alone: consider the knowledge, relationships, and confidence people need to participate. Show how your initiative would respond to a specific need, respect the communities involved, and sustain its activity through a viable service or product.

ERUA SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP
Social challenges across the alliance

Interculturality and multilingualism

THEMATIC AREA 4 / 5

- 4.1 | Language access and support
- 4.2 | Intercultural understanding and cohesion
- 4.3 | Cultural and linguistic representation
- 4.4 | Education and economic inclusion across cultural backgrounds
- 4.5 | Global and cross-cultural knowledge
- 4.6 | Inclusive internationalisation

Arts and edges

- 5.1 | Cultural-sector sustainability
- 5.2 | Professional and entrepreneurial capacity
- 5.3 | Culture in peripheral communities
- 5.4 | Inclusive cultural access and production
- 5.5 | Resources and diversity in arts education
- 5.6 | Cultural identity and acceptance
- 5.7 | Creativity, well-being, and social connection
- 5.8 | Human rights in socioeconomic transformation

Arts and edges

If you choose arts and edges, consider who can create, share, and experience culture—and who faces barriers because of location, income, disability, age, or cultural background. The ERUA report highlights dependence on public funding, gaps in entrepreneurial and project-management skills, limited access to artistic resources, and difficulties protecting or earning income from creative work. In peripheral communities, depopulation, concentrated cultural provision, and weak intergenerational continuity can further restrict opportunities. Other challenges concern cultural recognition, social isolation, mental well-being, and pressure to conform to dominant forms of expression. Your idea could widen cultural participation, support artists' livelihoods, connect generations, or strengthen cultural activity in an underserved community. Begin with the people whose opportunities you want to improve and explain how artistic practice, cultural services, or creative production could generate lasting social value with a sustainable economic foundation.