ROOM:
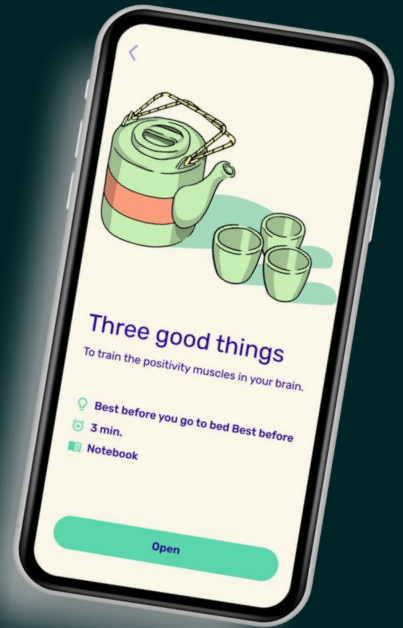# a digital tool for student wellbeing

Bente van den Akker
Student Wellbeing Progamme
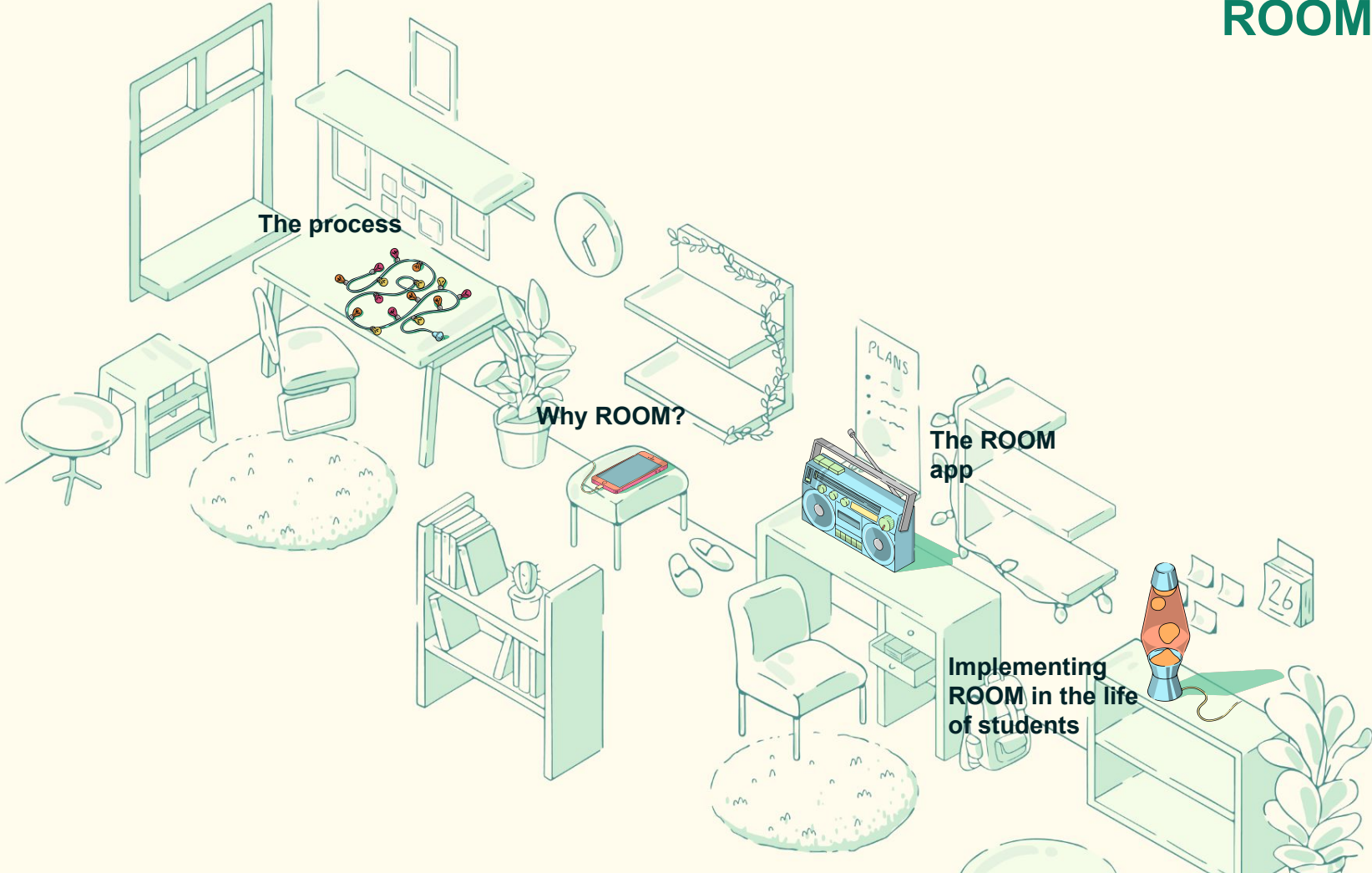
The process

Why ROOM?

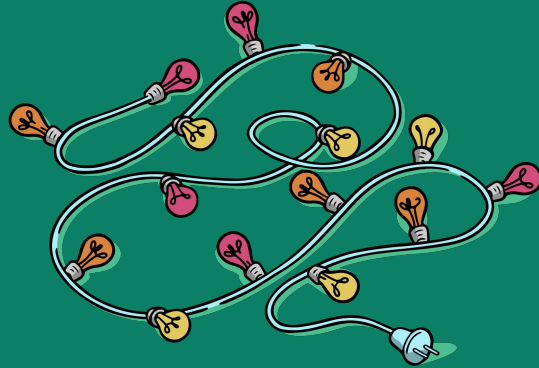The ROOM app

PLANS

Implementing ROOM in the life of students
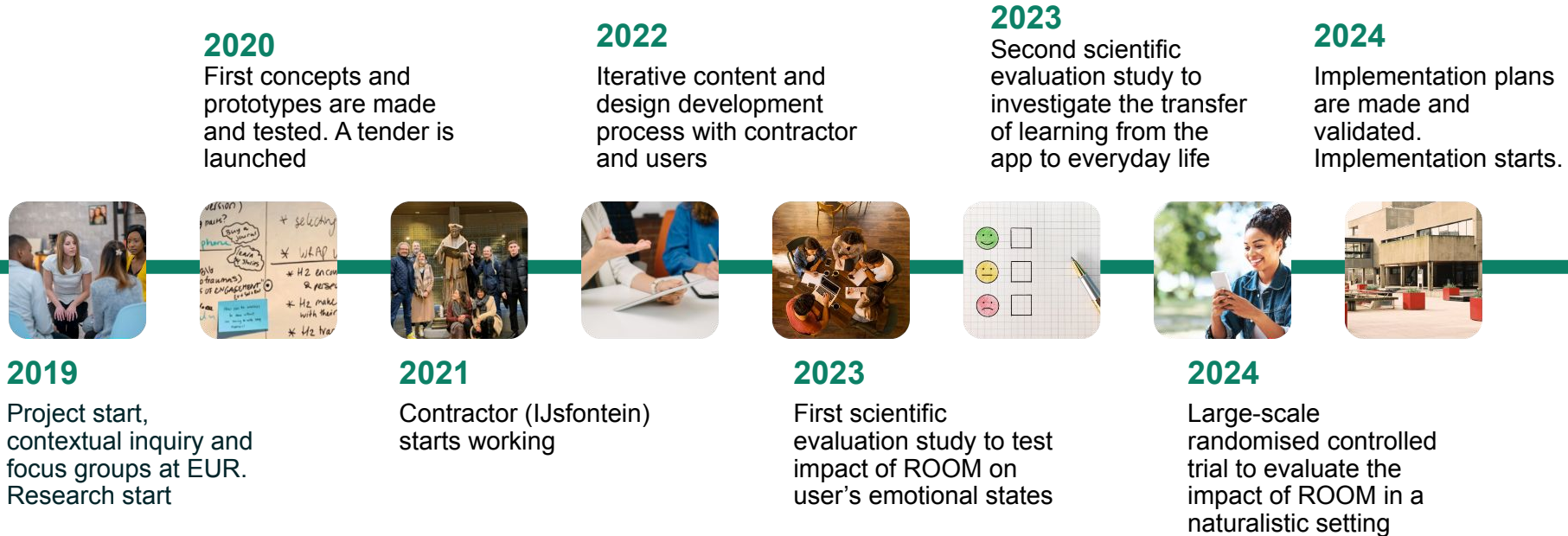
Student Mental Health needs attention

The Process

The timeline so far

2020
First concepts and prototypes are made and tested. A tender is launched

2022
Iterative content and design development process with contractor and users

2023
Second scientific evaluation study to investigate the transfer of learning from the app to everyday life

2024
Implementation plans are made and validated. Implementation starts.

2019
Project start, contextual inquiry and focus groups at EUR. Research start

2021
Contractor (IJsfontein) starts working

2023
First scientific evaluation study to test impact of ROOM on user's emotional states

2024
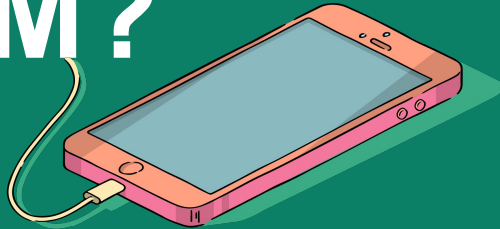Large-scale randomised controlled trial to evaluate the impact of ROOM in a naturalistic setting

Why ROOM?

Our exploration* shows that Students…

Often don't ask for help

› The stigma around mental health is still high, and students are either reluctant to ask for help, or do so when it is 'too late'.

Like to solve their problems alone

› They are interested in self-help and learning how to better manage their stress and problems.

Use technology for their wellbeing

› The use of wellbeing and lifestyle apps and social media content is commonly used to help manage wellbeing.

Face information overload

› With the wealth of content online, it is difficult for students to know what is relevant and reliable for them.

Value scientific information

› EUR students value evidence-based sources of information, often seeking to judge what is 'scientific' before trusting it.

Do not have a lot of time

› Between studies, responsibilities, social life, and side jobs, students do not have much time to dedicate to other things.

* Based on focus groups and qualitative interviews with students & study advisors

Introduction of ROOM
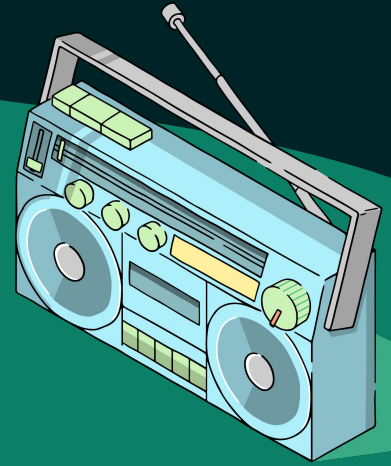
ROOM…

Interventions from a diversity of evidence-based therapeutic approaches.

› To make sure that there is something for everybody

Smart, machine-learning based recommendation system for personalisation.

› To reduce the burden of choice and improve enhance effectiveness by recommending what is most likely to work for any given student

A calm, approachable & empathic look and feel.

› To make the app appealing to come back to.

An innovative, proactive and positive approach to mental health and wellbeing.

› Using a transdiagnostic approach to focus on emotion regulation strategies

Behaviour change and learning transfer techniques.

› To make sure that ROOM has a long-lasting impact

Gamification and user-centred design

› To introduce playfulness and engagement with the app

The Therapeutic Approaches

Psychoeducation
To build mental health literacy

Breathing & Relaxation
To calm the nervous system

Positive Psychology
To increase positive feelings

Mood check-ins & Questionnaires
To build self-reflection and awareness

Acceptance & Commitment Therapy
To get 'unstuck' from difficult thoughts and feelings, and live according to values.

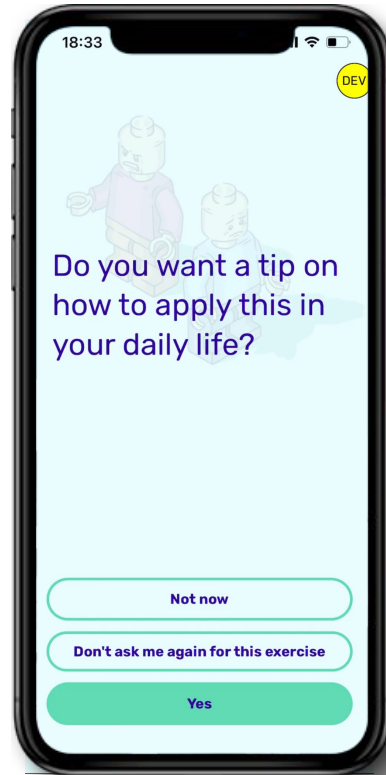**Cognitive Behavioural Therapy**
To learn how to challenge and manage difficult thoughts and feelings

Self-compassion
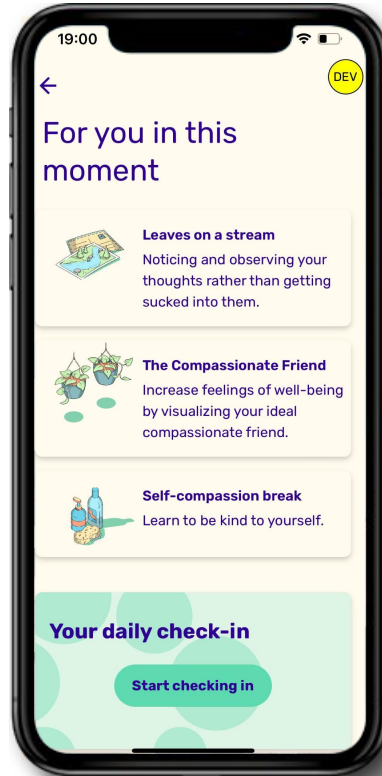To learn to treat oneself kindly, and thus improve self-efficacy

Mindfulness
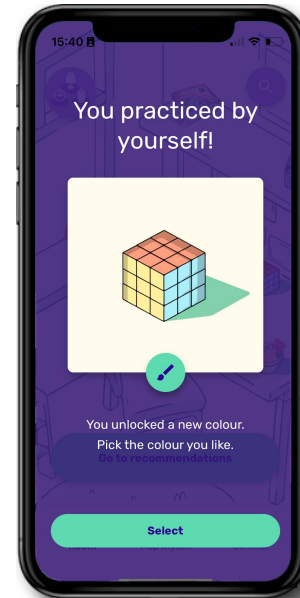To be grounded in the present moment and reduce stress
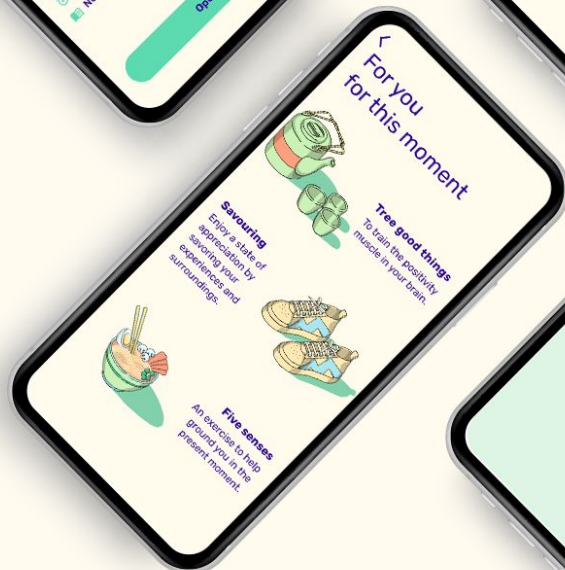
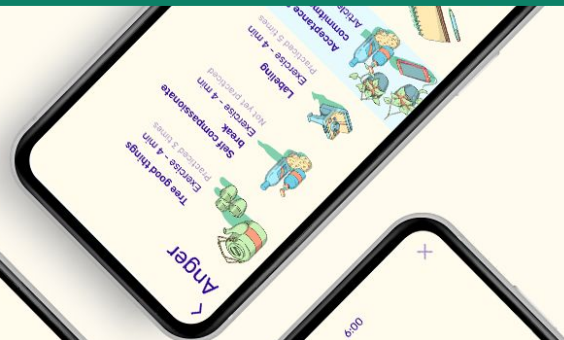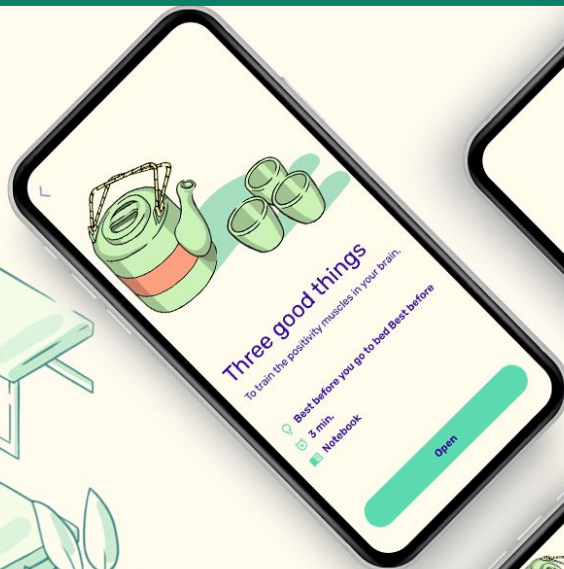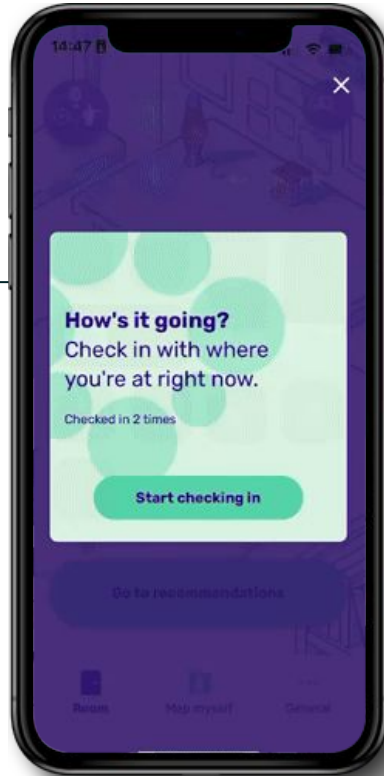# Transfer techniques

Personalisation

Gamifying the journey

ROOM

ERASMUS UNIVERSITEIT ROTTERDAM

Check-in with yourself

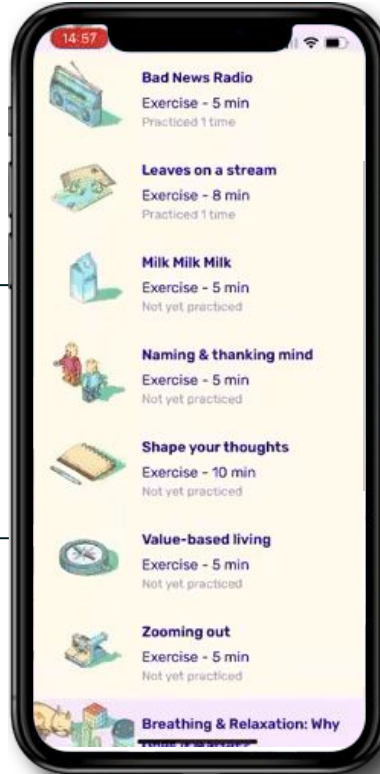Users are encouraged to 'check-in' with their mood daily

ROOM recommends exercises that are helpful for the user based on their mood, past activities, and context

Do Exercises

ROOM offers short exercises from a variety of therapeutic approaches

The content has been tested and validated in multiple rounds of user testing

Short exercises ranging from 3 - 15 minutes

The exercises selected are evidence-based

Different exercises depending on what the user wants to achieve

Collect Objects in your ROOM

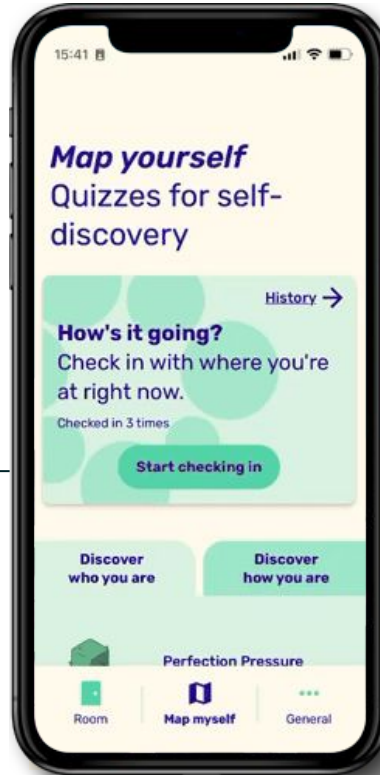Users can unlock objects by completing exercises

Objects can be added to their 'ROOM'

The ROOM can be personalised, with the user unlocking more objects and customisation options as they progress through the app

You completed

7

exercises in the app.

Don't let it stop there! Remember to practice what you learnt when you're out and about.

Finish exercise

Learn more about yourself

Illustrations are unlocked as they complete questionnaires

Users can fill out questionnaires to learn more about who they are and how they are doing

Personalised feedback

ROOM refers users to other support services when needed

Users receive personalised feedback based on their questionnaire responses

Exercises that help with the topic are suggested

# Implementing ROOM in the life of students
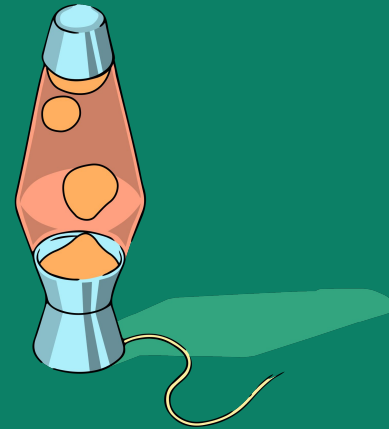
Implementation approach

› We believe the **EUR should have a facilitating role**.

› Therefore the focus of the implementation of the ROOM-app lies not solely on '**pushing students to use the app'**, but a **bottom-up student-lead approach** leading to usage of the app.

› With over 30.000 students, our students are very divers. We've made **6 persona's** in which we roughly can divide our students when it comes to wellbeing. Some are really looking for tools and are prone to respond to campaigns of ROOM. Yet **students who are not actively experiencing** stressors at the moment or have a more fulfilled social circle will need to get convinced in different ways. The persona's help us identify the different groups and **different communication styles and channels** that we need.

› ROOM will be available for all students, yet we specifically would like to target **first year (bachelor) students**

› With implementation we will focus (for now) on the first 3-5 months of the academic year, **starting from Eureka Week**

› The goal of the app is not to engage you each and every day, but we aim to use the app for **2-3 weeks**, to get acquainted with the different exercises and **choose & apply what fits you best**

Why focus on prevention?

Research shows that adaptive coping mechanisms decrease and maladaptive (unhealthy) coping mechanisms increase in the first years of higher education. Therefore training and strengthening the practice of adaptive mechanisms is important.

Validation approach

ROOM-Radio Storyboard

› We've talked to students identifying with the different persona's, by

 › brainstorming with the boards of sport-, study- & student associations

 › invite students assistants & hosts who are already working for the programme to think along

 › walk-out on campus (🌟) to randomly ask students *(20 students in less than three hours)*

› Make the validation interesting by using a storyboard instead of another questionnaire
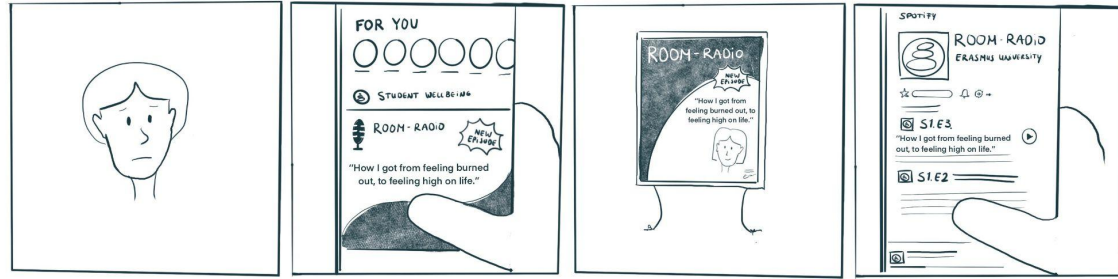
So basically make use of the fact that you're working in the same building or at the same campus as your target audience!

Room for questions :)