
Guidelines for a Green Tourism Business Challenge

WP5 (Deliverable D5.2)



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1. Brief Overview

Since the teaching and learning methods at higher education institutions (HEIs) in the [Erasmus+ ENRICHER hubs project's](#) target countries of Georgia and Moldova are still quite traditional, there is a need to introduce more innovative approaches. This would help improve skills and ensure they meet the demands of the future job market and the needs of the tourism industry.

This ***Guidelines for a Green Tourism Business Challenge*** manual is designed to complement the training materials developed within the ENRICHER hubs' third work package (WP3) and is intended for use by teachers and lecturers. It should be regarded as a supportive resource rather than a comprehensive course guide. Educators are encouraged to draw on their own pedagogical expertise, experience, and creativity when integrating the material into their teaching.

The content of this manual aims to provide guidance and inspiration, particularly in relation to business case challenges and the preparation of students for the design sprint methodology. It is not intended to replace a full course but rather to enhance and support existing teaching practices.

This manual has been developed to support teachers in introducing students to the principles and practice of service design. This approach is grounded in the concept of designing services in a structured and intentional way, similar to the development of physical products. Service design emphasises collaborative engagement with stakeholders (including customers, employees, and other relevant actors) while adopting a user- and human-centred perspective. It also takes a holistic view, considering the entire ecosystem in which a service operates. By making intangible interactions visible and structuring service experiences over time, service design enables organisations to enhance service quality and create meaningful value for their target groups.

The service design, or design thinking, approach supports organisations in improving both customer and employee satisfaction. It encourages a systems-oriented mindset, which is essential in complex sectors such as tourism, and helps ensure that services are high-quality, accessible, and consistent across all stakeholder groups.

Furthermore, the use of early-stage prototyping and iterative testing allows organisations to assess the feasibility of ideas before full implementation. Importantly, the approach embraces experimentation, recognising that failure can be a valuable learning opportunity and, in many cases, can help prevent costly mistakes in later stages.

The integration of the service design approach into teaching aims not only to convey theoretical knowledge but also to actively engage students and foster their participation and self-confidence. By adopting a "learning by doing" philosophy, students are encouraged to experience the approach firsthand and to experiment with a variety of tools and methods in practice.

Incorporating a real-world partner into a design sprint offers significant benefits for all stakeholders involved. For businesses, it provides a collection of innovative ideas addressing a defined challenge, many of which can be further developed and implemented. For HEIs, it strengthens the connection between academia and industry, demonstrating their role in

facilitating meaningful collaboration and knowledge exchange. For students, working with a practical partner offers valuable insights into real-life organisational contexts, significantly enhancing their motivation and engagement. This experiential learning approach helps bridge the gap between theory and practice, better preparing them for their future professional roles.



Before starting the challenge, the university and practical partner (or several partners) define a challenge. This challenge should give the students a framework in which they can operate. The framework should be wide enough to allow students to develop diverse ideas, but at the same time point out limitations (e.g., do any time, financial, or other restrictions apply?). The students work on the challenge, do research, ideate and design a solution to the business challenge in a few days (or longer period) and the business representatives / jury of entrepreneurs give feedback for the results during the final presentation. This technique can be applied to sustainable tourism and business education. It offers a concrete method to increase cooperation between HEIs and the industry.

The activities are based on the ENRICHER hubs project work package 3 (WP3), which focused on capacity building and the training of trainers (ToT) in the target countries (Moldova and Georgia), delivered by EU partners (Austria, Finland, and Italy).

The staff trained in WP3 work with students offering training and coaching. They were also involved in the organization of;

- A) a student kick-off webinar on future consumer trends in tourism (a collaborative effort with EU partners) and
- B) Green Tourism Business Challenge

At the end of the Green Tourism Business Challenge, students are expected to:

- Apply basic service design and design thinking methods in practice;

- Conduct desk research and semi-structured interviews to identify and analyze tourism-related challenges;
- Combine information from different sources to develop evidence-based insights;
- Define and frame problems through “How Might We” questions;
- Generate and evaluate innovative ideas addressing sustainability-related challenges;
- Develop and test early-stage prototypes and service concepts;
- Present solutions in a clear and structured manner;
- Reflect critically on the feasibility, strengths, and limitations of proposed solutions;
- Collaborate effectively in multidisciplinary teams under time constraints.

2. Pre-Business Case Challenge Phase

2.1 Preparatory Stage with Tourism Business Sector Stakeholders

First preparatory stage in preparing for the Business Case Challenge, it is advisable for responsible coordinators and lecturers to establish interaction with representatives of the tourism business sector to identify relevant practical challenges. For this purpose, a short questionnaire is developed and distributed through existing cooperation channels, including public structures (e.g., tourist information centers, the national tourism organization, etc.), local action groups and NGOs, student internship bases, and partner business communities. The accumulated database of participants from the 10 stakeholder trainings (conducted in 2026) can also be used as a source of stakeholders. However, it should not be considered the only source and should be complemented with additional outreach.

The collected responses enable the selection of real business cases that reflect current industry challenges and allow student work to be tailored to the actual needs of entrepreneurs. Such an approach ensures a practice-oriented learning process and strengthens interaction between HEIs and industry at national, regional and local levels.



Table 1: Questionnaire for Tourism Businesses (Annex 1)

<p>1. Basic information about your business (Name, type of activity, location)</p> <p>2. Which sector best describes your activity?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Accommodation <input type="checkbox"/> Food & Beverage / Gastronomy <input type="checkbox"/> Tour operator / Travel agency <input type="checkbox"/> Wine tourism / Agro-tourism <input type="checkbox"/> Cultural / Event tourism <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ <p>3. What are the main challenges your business is currently facing? (You may select multiple options)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Marketing and promotion <input type="checkbox"/> Attracting customers / tourists <input type="checkbox"/> Seasonality <input type="checkbox"/> Digitalization / online presence <input type="checkbox"/> Service quality / customer experience <input type="checkbox"/> Sustainability / environmental impact <input type="checkbox"/> Staff / human resources <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ <p>4. Please describe one specific problem or challenge you would like students to work on (Short description of the business case)</p> <p>_____</p> <p>5. What type of results would you expect from a student team?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> New business ideas / concepts <input type="checkbox"/> Marketing strategy / branding <input type="checkbox"/> Digital solutions (soc. media, website, etc.) <input type="checkbox"/> Sustainable tourism solutions <input type="checkbox"/> Customer experience improvements <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ 	<p>6. Do you have data or materials that could support student work?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes (statistics, reports, internal data) <input type="checkbox"/> Limited data available <input type="checkbox"/> No <p>7. Are you willing to interact with students during the project?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes (regular communication) <input type="checkbox"/> Occasionally <input type="checkbox"/> No <p>8. Are you interested in testing or implementing proposed solutions?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Maybe <input type="checkbox"/> No <p>9. Which sustainable practices are currently implemented in your business? (multiple options)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Use of local products and services (support of local producers) <input type="checkbox"/> Environmentally friendly practices (waste reduction, energy efficiency, water saving) <input type="checkbox"/> Promotion of local culture and heritage <input type="checkbox"/> Inclusion and accessibility (services for people with disabilities, inclusive employment) <input type="checkbox"/> Cooperation with local communities <input type="checkbox"/> Sustainable mobility solutions (e.g., cycling, low-carbon transport) <input type="checkbox"/> We are planning to introduce sustainable practices <input type="checkbox"/> Not currently implemented <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ <p>10. Contact person and details (Name, email, phone)</p>
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Implementation of the Business Challenge may involve several practical challenges, including limited engagement of business representatives, restricted data availability, unclear problem definitions, or limited access to stakeholders. To address these situations, organizers may consider preparing backup business cases in advance and maintaining alternative cases or fictional scenarios based on realistic tourism contexts. Teachers may also provide curated background materials, datasets, or simplified examples to support

student work where necessary. In addition, early communication with business partners may help clarify expectations regarding the scope and level of student outputs.

2.2 Kick-off Student Webinar before Business Case Challenge

Note: If all participants of a sprint are students on the same campus, it might be more meaningful to have a lecture about trends instead of a webinar.

Second preparatory stage of the Business Case Challenge can be a kick-off webinar for students focusing on future consumer trends in tourism. This initial activity provides a broad overview of societal changes and highlights key trends shaping the industry. Lecturers can then identify and emphasize those trends most relevant to the defined business challenge.

In addition, an online student workshop can be organized at the outset as part of the kick-off phase. This session may focus on topics such as sustainable tourism service concepts and evolving consumer behavior, for example within the European context. The aim is to encourage students to develop a wider understanding of what modern tourists value in their travel experiences. To maximize its impact, the webinar should be scheduled close to the start of the Business Case Challenge, ensuring a strong and relevant foundation for subsequent student work.



Table 2: Kick-off webinar topic, duration and roles

Possible Topic focus:	(EU) consumer trends relevant for tourism
Approximate Duration:	2 h
Number of students:	not restricted
Form of introduction:	Face-to-face or using different Platforms like Zoom, Teams, etc.

Students collaboration:	in groups
Moderators:	at least one per team (flexibility is possible, online a moderator can move from one breakout room to another, depending on how many groups are there)
Main targets:	students from relevant faculties / departments
Selection of the participants:	Should be managed by the respective faculties and trained persons / teachers involved in the course. Selection process is based on selection criteria such as the level of connection to the tourism and / or service industry. The level of English proficiency (not less than B1, Common European Framework of References) with ability to freely read and understand information in English may be advisable.

During the Introductory part of the webinar input on consumer behavior and on tourism trends showing possible megatrends can be provided for students.

Trends are an inspiring way to start focusing on a challenge. First of all, it is important to distinguish between megatrends (the overall trends that will be with us for decades to come and have major impact globally, e.g., climate change and loss of biodiversity, technological change and artificial intelligence, sustainable development, demographic change, urbanization and globalization), consumer trends (that are often based on the megatrends and have a shorter life span, they affect how we live and consume, for example, climate anxiety and low carbon lifestyles), and travel trends that are more focused on the way we consumer travel products and experiences.



The Sitra megatrend cards are a great way to think about the future and all the implications for sustainability. The [Sitra megatrend cards](#) are available online. A valuable source for travel and tourism industry insights is [Skift](#) and for consumer trends [Euromonitor International](#). Also check: [Brandwatch](#), [McKinsey & Company](#), [Intel](#), [Phocuswire](#), [Trendwatching](#), [Google Trends](#) for the latest consumer trends. For further insights about travel trends, check out [Amadeus](#), [Skyscanner](#), [Hilton](#), [Booking.com](#), [Conde Nast Traveler](#)

After the introduction to trends and consumer behavior, it is time for engaging the students. For the student activity, the trend canvas template works well for discussions. Student groups will pick trends (for example from the megatrend cards) which are relevant for their challenges and will work out the trend canvas in a breakout room / team with a moderator / teacher.

The trend canvas and an example task:

Trend canvas - The tool to work with trend cards

GETTING TO GRIPS WITH A TREND

The trend's impact on what we do

<p>TREND Choose from the trend cards</p>	<p>THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TREND TO US Mark on the scale:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> insignificant ————— significant </p>	<p>IMPACTS ON US What opportunities and threats does the trend pose to our activities?</p>						
<p>CHANGES IN SOCIETY How does the trend show itself and how does it affect everything around you?</p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 33%; border-right: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">NOW</td> <td style="width: 33%; border-right: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">5 YEARS</td> <td style="width: 33%; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">20 YEARS</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="height: 150px;"></td> <td style="height: 150px;"></td> <td style="height: 150px;"></td> </tr> </table>		NOW	5 YEARS	20 YEARS				<p>THIS IS HOW WE ACT How do you respond to and prepare yourself for the changes caused by the trend? Think of three actions that you can take now.</p>
NOW	5 YEARS	20 YEARS						
<p>OUR STRENGTHS IN RELATION TO THE CHOSEN TREND</p>								

sitra.fi/megatrends **SITRA**

1. Form a group with your team
2. Pick a trend card (for example from the Sitra megatrend cards available online).
3. Discuss the trend and its impact on sustainable tourism with your group using the trend canvas template. Fill in the boxes on the template.
4. Share the results with others!

More information about Sitra, the Finnish Innovation Fund, and detailed instructions for the work with the trend cards and canvas can be found on [Sitra's website](#).

Following the student activities conducted in breakout rooms or teams, a short sharing session should be organised. One student from each group is invited to present key lessons learned within a time limit of 2–5 minutes. This allows for the exchange of insights and promotes peer learning across groups.

The session should conclude with overall feedback and reflection to consolidate learning outcomes and encourage critical thinking.

After the initial online student workshop—organised as a kick-off event to explore green tourism service concepts and future consumer behaviour—a Business Case Challenge should then be introduced as the next stage of the process.

Below is an example of the agenda structure for the online kick-off webinar, jointly organized by ENRICHER hubs project partners (EU and target country partners):

Table 3: A general structure of the agenda for the online kick-off webinar / introductory trend lecture and workshop

European consumer behavior and future trends in Tourism	
Introduction: ENRICHER hubs project, Business case Challenge & purpose of the webinar	15 minutes
A Cultural Perspective on Consumer Behavior	15 minutes
Future trends in tourism and trend canvas	15 minutes
Teamwork on trend canvas in teams	30 minutes
Sharing ideas with other groups	30 minutes – 10 groups, 2-3 minutes per group
Lessons learned and key take aways	15 minutes

2.3 Selection of Sustainable Business Cases

Following an introductory session on trends and student engagement activities, the **third preparatory stage** involves selecting relevant business cases. Based on responses received from tourism businesses through a distributed questionnaire, faculty and coordinators jointly review and select cases that are both practically relevant and aligned with sustainable development priorities. Particular attention is given to cases that address issues related to [the UN Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#), such as responsible consumption, climate action, inclusive growth, and sustainable tourism development.



The selection process considers criteria such as feasibility for student work, clarity of problem statement, potential impact, and opportunities for innovation (Tables 4 and Table 5). The resulting portfolio of business cases is distributed among student teams (participated and formed during kick off Students webinar), ensuring that each task reflects real industry needs and contributes to the achievement of the SDGs. This stage ensures a strong connection between academic activities, business expectations, and global sustainability programs.

Table 4: Evaluation Matrix

Nº	Criterion	1 – Low	2 – Medium	3 – High
1	Relevance to real business needs	The problem does not reflect real business challenges	Partially reflects business needs	Fully reflects current and relevant business challenges
2	Alignment with sustainability & SDGs	No connection to sustainability	Indirect or weak connection	Clear and strong alignment with SDGs
3	Clarity & feasibility of problem	Problem is unclear and difficult to analyze	Partially structured and understandable	Clearly defined and feasible for analysis
4	Innovation potential	No potential for innovation	Limited potential for new ideas	High potential for creative and innovative solutions
5	Data availability & business openness	No access to data	Limited access to data	Sufficient data available and openness of the business

Table 5: Summary Evaluation Table

Nº	Business Case/ Idea	Relevance (1-3)	SDGs Alignment (1-3)	Clarity & Feasibility (1-3)	Innovation (1-3)	Data Availability (1-3)	Total (max 15)
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							

3. Green Tourism Business Challenge

Main objective: to give an understanding of innovative pedagogical approaches and tools to enhance learning of green tourism and the possibilities of sustainability-oriented businesses. Design Sprints are given as an example of service design methods that can be used to implement the Green Tourism Business Challenge.

Aims: The aim is to practice using tools and methods for innovative sustainability-oriented service development. In recent years, innovative companies in many industries have started arranging hackathons or design sprints, where it is possible to gather data, research and test ideas intensively in a short period of time. Design sprints are used by companies for product development as they save time, effort and money. Through design sprints, companies can gain customer / employee understanding and knowledge of how their products, services and innovations are received by various stakeholder groups.

Prior to implementation of the Business Case Challenge, it is recommended that students are aware of or are introduced to the possible following topics:

✓ **Sustainability Thinking** – theories and framework for Sustainable Tourism;

Relevant sources can be found using following links:

Sustainable development: <https://sdgs.un.org/>






Tourism in the Agenda 2030: <https://www.untourism.int/tourism-in-2030-agenda>

UN SDGs: <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

Tourism4SDGs: <https://tourism4sdgs.org/> is a co-creation platform with many tools and inspiration

✓ **Design Thinking** – Framework and Service Design methods;

Service Design Principles

	User-centered Experience through customer's eyes
	Co-creative Produce jointly with all stakeholders a mutually valued outcome
	Sequencing Sequence interrelated actions and individual process steps
	Evidencing Visualize intangible services in terms of physical aspects
	Holistic Consider the entire environment of a service

✓ **Service Design in action** – Experiential learning methods & tools for competence in green tourism

Defining the real problem is the 1st step towards solving it.

“Listen more than you talk. Nobody learned anything by hearing themselves speak.”

Richard Branson, founder of Virgin Group



4. Design Sprint

4.1 Student Group Onboarding and Briefing Stage

In a design sprint, students will:

- ✓ Test the key hypotheses behind a product / service or business / organization
- ✓ Rapidly build realistic prototypes that are optimized for solving the defined challenge
- ✓ Run effective contextual interviews that give concrete, actionable results
- ✓ Make fast, high-quality decisions without endless debate or cognitive biases

- ✓ Condense months of product and strategy work into a few days / one week

However, a design sprint is not only about efficiency. It also provides an effective way to move beyond traditional working methods, replacing them with a more thoughtful and impactful approach to problem-solving, one that harnesses the strengths of the entire team and ensures that time is focused on what truly matters.

Setting the stage is important and it includes defining the broader topic / challenge for the design sprint (see Paragraph 2 Pre-Business Case Challenge Phase).

Design sprints conducted in collaboration with industry representatives provide an opportunity to define real-world challenges and engage students in developing practical solutions. By sourcing the challenge directly from industry, the process supports local businesses and regions while offering students valuable experience working on authentic cases.

Preparation for the sprint involves identifying a suitable partner, clearly defining the challenge in advance, and engaging relevant experts and stakeholders—such as customers and employees—for initial interviews. This ensures that students gain a comprehensive understanding of the topic and its context.

Teachers can divide their students into groups of 3-5 per team. Small teams are advisable to ensure everybody's involvement. At least 2 coaches (teachers) are needed for each sprint.

It is advisable to conduct the student invitation and selection process after the webinar—select participants and assign them to working groups. At this stage, briefings on further work are provided

- Create student groups and inform them about it.
- Divide students into diverse groups (mix students according to gender, age, faculties, country of origin, language, etc.)
- Inform students about the sprint and give them information beforehand (See the following written information as an example.)

Dear students,

we are happy to welcome you to the Service Design class starting xx.

Who are we?

Introduce the lecturers

What is this course all about?

You should not only learn what Service Design is but EXPERIENCE it yourself. Therefore, you will be working on an applied project during x days in form of a Service Design Sprint in cooperation with a practical partner.

Which technical support will we use?

Throughout the sprint, we will use the online tool Miro. To make our experience as smooth as possible, please take a minute to download MIRO on your laptop. We found it is a much better experience when we all are using desktop apps rather than the browser. Please note you do NOT

need to pay for any Miro account! You will be invited to our space. Please also bring your laptops and a power plug! It's going to be a long day!

Furthermore, you might already have a look at the following Miro Tutorial in case you have not worked with the software before:

- How to get started with Miro: <https://www.youtube.com/embed/7L1-ODOGHDY>
- How to navigate around a Miro board: <https://www.youtube.com/embed/0olcwCD9-GM>

Get to know your team...

We have already put you into teams of XX students for this course. You can find the list attached.

We are looking forward to working with you!

It is also possible to include a small homework or pre-assignment activity, where students can already relate to the topic.

4.2 Preparatory Research and Stakeholder Engagement

It is recommended that teachers, the facilitators of the sprint, collect research material on the topic (both grey and academic literature) to be used for the research phase. Students will not have time to do this during the sprint.

It is important to engage relevant experts for both the initial interview phase and the final prototype testing. While the same individuals may participate in both stages, this may vary depending on their availability. Collaboration with the partner organisation is essential in identifying and securing suitable experts.

Ensuring a diverse group of participants for both interviews and testing is equally important. A broad range of perspectives enables students to develop a deeper understanding of the challenge, which in turn has a significant impact on the quality and relevance of the solutions they produce.

4.2.1 Expert Interviews and Research Preparation

It is advisable to collect research materials on the topic to support the research phase, as students will have limited time to conduct desk research during the sprint. Combining different sources of information (interviews, desk research) may be helpful to develop more robust insights. In parallel, it is important to organize interviews with subject-matter experts at the beginning of the process, as well as involve them later in the testing phase. These may include academics, industry analysts, policy experts, and representatives of sectoral organizations. The partner institutions should support the identification and engagement of experts. Ensuring diversity among experts is essential, as it broadens perspectives and directly influences the quality of student solutions.

4.2.2 Semi-structured Interviews with Selected Business Cases

In addition to expert input, students conduct semi-structured interviews with representatives of tourism businesses selected for the Business Case Challenge (typically

4–5 cases). Prior to the interviews, students collect and analyze primary information about each business from publicly available sources (websites, social media, reviews, reports), forming an initial understanding of the business model and potential problem areas.

Based on this preliminary desk research, students prepare interview guides and conduct semi-structured interviews aimed at refining and validating identified challenges, uncovering hidden issues, and clarifying specific business needs. Focusing on a limited number of selected cases ensures a deeper level of analysis and more meaningful interaction with business stakeholders.

Table 6: Semi-structured Interview Guide (Annex 2)*

*Note: These tools can be used as needed, in the case of more active involvement of students in the development of real business proposals.

<p>1. Can you briefly describe your tourism business and your main target visitors? <i>(Type of services: accommodation, gastronomy, tours, activities, etc.; key markets — local/international; main customer segments)</i></p> <p>2. What are the main challenges your business is currently facing in the tourism market? <i>(e.g., seasonality, attracting tourists, digital visibility, service quality, competition)</i></p> <p>3. Which challenge is the most urgent for you at the moment and why? <i>(Helps define the core problem for the student team)</i></p> <p>4. How do you currently address this challenge? What works well and what are the limitations? <i>(Understanding existing practices and identifying gaps)</i></p> <p>5. What sustainable practices are already implemented in your business? <i>(e.g., use of local products, eco-friendly operations, promotion of cultural heritage, inclusion and accessibility, cooperation with local communities)</i></p> <p>6. Do you see opportunities to make your business more sustainable? What are the main barriers? <i>(e.g., costs, lack of knowledge, seasonality, infrastructure limitations, etc.)</i></p> <p>7. What strengths or unique features of your business could support future development? <i>(e.g., local identity, traditions, partnerships, location, team, experience)</i></p> <p>8. What kind of solutions or support would you expect from a student team?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> New tourism product/service concept</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Sustainable/eco solutions</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Marketing and branding strategy</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Digital tools (social media, website, booking systems)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Customer experience improvements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____</p>
--

Important things to note and consider when planning a sprint are the following:

❑ **Blocking five full days on the calendar.** Reserving time with sprint team from 10am to 5pm Monday through Thursday, and 9am to 5pm Friday. Agenda is flexible and can be adapted to the institution's usual schedule. In general, it is advisable to remember the intensive nature of the sprint and the importance of time discipline.

Also, making sure that everyone gets a meal and snacks during the day is vital. It is important to stay energetic throughout the sprint.

❑ **Booking a room with whiteboards / flip charts for each team.** Reserving a sprint room for the entire week. Booking a second room for interviews and testing. This also depends if the interviews and testing have to be done at the university or if possible, can also be done on site. Depending on the size of the groups, it is important to have enough space. However, an auditorium with a set seating is not an ideal space for a sprint. Group work and building prototypes require more flexibility. Create spaces for each group to work.

❑ **Or working online.** Use Miro and Zoom to run sprint remotely. It may be less fun but allows for an online sprint. The results can be equally good!

4.3 Sprint Supplies Needed

❑ **Computers / Laptops / Tablets.** Miro works best on a device with lots of RAM and a huge display. Students should download the app in order to have quicker access to Miro.

❑ **Fast internet.** Make sure that the internet works well for collaboration in Zoom and Miro.

❑ **Quality camera.** Optional, but a nice camera helps the team come to life even if they are not in the same room.

❑ **Sticky notes / Post-it notes.** Make sure that you have enough for each group, preferably in different colors.

❑ **Felt-tip pens.** Use felt-tip pens for sketching. Avoid thin pens that lead to excessively detailed or hard-to-read writing, and make sure each group has enough markers available.

❑ **Printer paper.** For sketching (sadly, not everything fits on a sticky note). Get one hundred sheets, letter-size or A4. If possible, flip-chart papers would be good, too, if whiteboards are not available for each group.

❑ **Timers.** To effectively manage time throughout the sprint, it is recommended to use two timing mechanisms: one to monitor the duration of each activity and ensure it stays on schedule, and another to signal breaks. While a mobile phone can serve this purpose, using a dedicated timing tool that produces a clear audible signal can be particularly effective in capturing students' attention and maintaining the pace of the session.

❑ **Healthy snacks.** Good snacks will help keep your team's energy up throughout the day. Eat real food like apples, bananas, yogurt, cheese, and nuts. For a boost, have dark chocolate, coffee, and tea. Get more than enough for everybody.



If the sprint is conducted in person in a classroom setting, the following additional materials will be required:

- ❑ **Whiteboards.** Wall-mounted are best, but rolling whiteboards are good, too. Alternatives: Flip-chart papers, Idea Paint, Post-it easel pads, or butcher paper taped to the walls. Get two big whiteboards (or equivalent surface area).
- ❑ **Colorful 3-by-5 sticky notes.** These are among the most essential materials for a design sprint. Ensure that each team has an ample supply. Whenever possible, provide sticky notes in a range of colours, as these can be used to differentiate purposes—for example, grouping ideas into categories or identifying contributions from different participants.
- ❑ **Whiteboard markers in different colors.** Using a thick marker will keep your ideas pithy and easy for others to read. Whiteboard markers are preferable as they are more versatile, they smell less, and there is no worry about accidentally putting a permanent mark on the whiteboard. Min 10 markers will be needed.
- ❑ **Masking tape.** For posting solution sketches on the walls. Get at least one roll.
- ❑ **Cardboard boxes and other building material.** For prototyping, depending on the topic, old brochures, cardboard boxes, stuff that students can use to build both research walls and prototypes, also Legos, Playmobil.

4.4 Design Sprint Stages

Typical stages of the Design Sprint:

Sprint Day 1: Presentation of the Challenge

Presentation by the company representative or field trip to the company / destination;
 Research phase: doing interviews (at the company / destination or as option it is also possible to invite the business representative to the university)

A challenge may be chosen or created.

Option A: Real company case (recommended as students find real-world cases more motivating)

- Use a real company problem (market entry, declining sales, expansion, marketing development)
- Make sure data is simplified but realistic

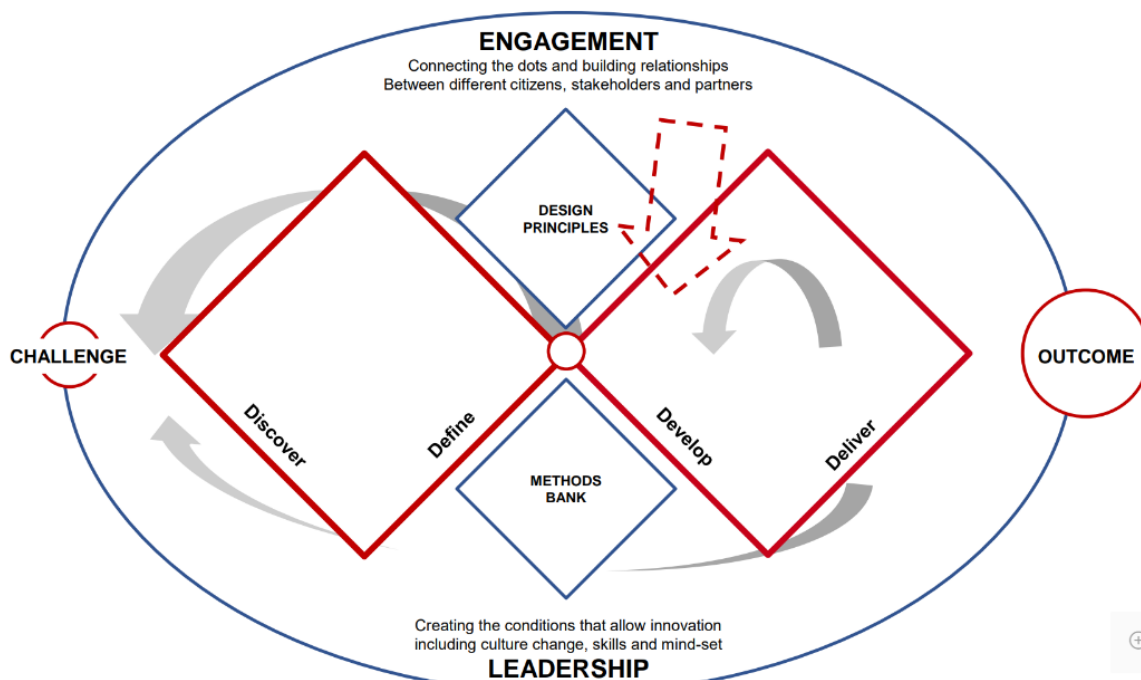
Option B: Fictional case

- Easier to control
- Avoids confidentiality issues

Remember: A good case is the heart of the challenge.

Start each day by explaining the day's agenda with the double diamond.

Activation: Start with a small activation for students. This helps them to stay focused and shows them straight away, that this is a new way of learning. You can find facilitation examples in the free online version of "This is Service Design Doing": <https://www.thisisservice.designdoing.com/methods>. For example, the "Yes, but" and "Yes, and" helps students to understand better, in which phases of the double diamond we need to open up (yes, and) and where we need to narrow down (yes, but).



© Design Council, 2019 <https://www.designcouncil.org.uk/news-opinion/what-framework-innovation-design-councils-evolved-double-diamond>

Partner presentation:

- Industry overview
- Company background
- Data (financials, charts, market info)
- Problem statement = Challenge (How can be improve...)
- Excursion on site

•First interviews on site, otherwise use the rest of the day for first desk research of students on the given topic

This is an example of how the schedule for the sprint day one could look like:

SPRINT DAY 1: Getting the challenge and initial interviews

10:00-11:00	Welcome words and introductions. Team-building activity.
11:00-13:00	Training session 1: Welcome and Research Prep, Research question.
13:00-14:00	Lunch Break
14:00-15:30	Training session 2: Visit to the company / presentation of the destination, etc. Presentation of challenge.
15:30-16:00	Coffee Break
16:00-17:30	Research phase – doing interviews (staff, customers, locals, suppliers, environmental groups, etc.) Debriefing + feedback.

Sprint Day 2: Research

Desk research, research wall, key insights, HMW (how might we) questions

Desk Research

What information is already there?

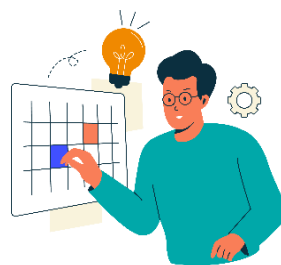
What can you find about a destination or company online, on their website, on social media, and on rating websites?

Which studies have already been carried out?

What has already been published in journals about the wider topic?



Research



Ideation



Prototyping

While researching and gaining customer insight, students have the chance to identify problems which should be solved during the sprint. To make students familiar with the topic, a contextual interview (going to the destination, partner company) can be used to get a lot of information in a short time. Also, observations, interviews with guests or employees, as well as desk research, such as analyzing company data (employee surveys, guest surveys) and conducting research on online reviews should be done by students. During the research phase, students will conduct research and research wall will be prepared to visualize findings and define the problem statement as a basis for ideation.

It is a good idea to give students an input on diverse methods to collect data, reflect on the quality of the data, data access, different types of triangulations and why this is important. Allow students to try out different types of data collection, e.g. qualitative, contextual interviews, observations, (auto-)ethnography, etc. and reflect on the data collection process. You can find various methods in the free online version of "This is Service Design Doing" here: <https://www.thisisservice.design.doing.com/methods>

Research is more than just collecting data

- Lots of raw (primary) data.
- Interview transcripts, photos, videos, numbers, etc.
- But we need to build insights within this data that creates value and understanding.

Therefore, data needs to be structured and visualized.

Structuring data

- Customer / employee / life journeys – understanding guests / staff's pain points
- Stakeholder maps – what does the ecosystem look like? Who are important stakeholders? What are their relationships?
- Personas – who are my clients / employees?

Structuring data can be done through building an analog or digital research wall. This helps students to structure and visualize data to understand the problem. This can be done through various steps:

- Data aggregation: what are the key takeaways from interviews, observations, desk research, etc. and where do they occur (e.g. where in the destination, where in the company, at which point of a lifetime journey)
- Formulation of key insights (see WP3 for this)
- Formulation of 3 How might we question as a result of the problem phase.

The aim is to end this phase with the formulation of research questions as How Might We (HMW) questions to make sure that we solve the right problem first. This means that a lot of time is spent on research.

Artificial intelligence can significantly support and enhance the research process in design sprints. Where possible, involving a lecturer with expertise in AI can add further value (for

example, by developing tailored AI agents to enable faster, more in-depth exploration of the topic).

Sprint facilitators should also guide students in the effective use of AI tools during their research activities. Many contemporary tools are particularly useful for organizing and clustering information, helping students to synthesize insights more efficiently. To ensure that students remain focused and aligned with the objectives, facilitators can provide pre-curated materials as input for AI-supported research. This helps maintain relevance while still allowing students to explore the topic in a structured and meaningful way.

This is an example of how the schedule for the sprint day two could look like:

SPRINT DAY 2: Research phase

10:00-11:00	Training session 1: Desk research. Different ways to do desk research. Academic sources and grey literature. A short break.
11:00-13:00	Training session 2: Continuing Desk Research and starting with Research wall. Experimenting with sources and tools.
13:00-14:00	Lunch Break
14:00-15:30	Training session 3: Building research wall, extra research.
15:30-16:00	Coffee Break
16:00-17:00	Key insights & HMW questions (end of problem space) Debriefing + feedback.

Sprint Day 3: Ideation and First Prototyping

Ideation, Start Prototyping, Physical prototyping; Prepare testing: Two ideas.

First ideation as a step before sketching concrete solutions is important. Keeping at least two ideas and prototyping them is also advisable, as if one idea fails, then students still have a second possibility and will not get lost. Initial prototyping includes first testing and doing a concept sketch. During prototyping it is important to remember that it is not obligatory to have realistic prototypes, more important is that they should serve as a basis for testing with target customers as well as with experts (depending on the challenge). Testing of the ideas should be followed by the debriefing and feedback.

Once the problem is defined, students can start thinking about ideas. First ideation as a step before sketching concrete solutions is important. Different methods can be used for ideation. The Crazy 8 help to create individual ideas first through sketching ideas visually and then sharing those within the groups. Other methods include brainstorming, brainwriting, etc. You can find more inspiration in the free version of "This is Service Design Doing" here <https://www.thisisservicedesigndoing.com/methods>

Through the crazy 8, students understand, that finding ideas is quite simple. However, it is important to evaluate those. This can be done through an idea portfolio, creating a matrix on the flipchart paper with the two axes of e.g. feasibility and impact. By doing so, students can decide which ideas to follow up with. Some ideas might also be merged. Students should keep at least two ideas to follow up with prototyping. If one idea fails, then students still have a second possibility and will not get lost. Find more information on this method

here. <https://www.thisisservicedesigndoing.com/methods/idea-portfolio>

Initial prototyping can be done through a service ad for example. This helps students again to think about the core value proposition of their idea. Also, this can be done through help of AI. First tests can be done by presenting the service ad to other students. Get more information here: <https://www.thisisservicedesigndoing.com/methods/service-advertisement>

This is an example of how the schedule for the sprint day three could look like:

SPRINT DAY 3: Ideation & First prototyping

10:00-11:00	Training session 1: Ideation (Shitty first draft + Crazy 8, Lotus Blossom, Octopus sorting). A short break
11:00-13:00	Training session 2: Start prototyping. Service Ad, first testing with guests & concept sketch. Based on three ideas.
13:00-14:00	Lunch Break
14:00-15:30	Training session 3: physical prototyping (Desktop Walkthrough, Cardboard prototyping, Wireframe, Marvel for App development, Roleplays). Two ideas.
15:30-15:45	Coffee Break
15.45-17.00	Training session 4: Prepare testing. Two ideas. Debriefing + feedback.

Sprint Day 4: Prototyping

The next step would then be the development of a concept sketch, which goes into more detail. This includes a description of the most important steps and their value for various stakeholders. Furthermore, also cardboard or paper prototyping can be done and used for desktop walkthroughs, interactive click models or wireframes for digital services or even investigative rehearsals. These prototypes do not have to be perfect or pretty; they have to be “good enough” for testing and getting the idea across to the right target group.

Testing is an essential part of this day. As a first round, student groups can be used for a first testing and feedback. However, it is very important to also include the real users of the future product or service. Therefore, experts from the initial interviews, representatives from the partner company / organization and other relevant stakeholders can be invited for testing. Students need to take notes during those feedback rounds and make sure, they have everything documented for the next day. The day should end with a debriefing and feedback round of students.

Days 4 and 5 can be combined into one day so that the sprint ends after the fourth day. An example of the last day of a 4-day sprint is given here:

SPRINT DAY 4: Prototyping & final pitch

9:00-11:00	Training session 1: Testing both ideas with experts. A short break.
11.00-13:00	Training session 2: Preparing presentations. Present one idea or combine the two ideas.
13:00-14:00	Lunch break.
14:00-17:00	Presentations of the solutions. Pitch of 3 minutes each + evaluation.

Small award + certificate. Closing remarks at the end of the sprint.



Sprint Day 5: Revising the Prototype and Final Presentation

Based on the feedback from the day before, students have time to revise their prototypes. It is even possible to include another round of testing and thus one more iteration cycle if time allows. At this point, students need to decide which prototype they want to continue with and present for their final pitch. Students get time to prepare these presentations, which are done with the prototype itself, no power point or canvas presentation necessary. Students should shortly cover the evolution process of their idea from the research phase to the How Might We (HMW) question, initial ideas to the final prototype. This is usually done in a pitch of 3-5 minutes.

Final presentations may include:

- a short introduction to the identified problem or challenge;
- presentation of the proposed solution and its value;
- explanation of how research and insights informed the idea;
- prototype demonstration or visualization;
- brief critical reflection on strengths, limitations, and possible improvements.

Possible presentation formats may include:

- storytelling;
- comic or sketch;
- short video;
- photo series;
- prototype demonstration;
- digital mock-up or similar creative formats.

Possible assessment criteria:

- clarity and quality of problem definition;
- quality and relevance of proposed solution;
- creativity and innovation;
- feasibility and potential impact;
- use of research and evidence;
- argumentation and critical reflection;
- presentation quality and communication;
- completeness and comprehensibility.

The final phase should include feedback that will be done by the partner selected at the pre-business challenge phase (paragraph 2.3) as well as other invited stakeholders - clients of the Hub. The business representatives could choose a winner (but it is not a must) or, if the commission is a general one, a jury of entrepreneurs could choose the winning team.

The jury could be based on entrepreneurs, not excluding teachers / professors from the relevant departments. In general, it is also possible to announce a student challenge, where students give feedback to each other and they decide on a winning team.

The important thing is that the students get proper feedback for their hard work. As an idea, all the experts maybe invited to give feedback and decide together on a winning team. Of course, the partner who defined the challenges should decide in the end, but the discussions between all experts could be quite useful.

4.5 Debrief

After a stressful and intensive sprint, there should be time left at the end to take a step back and reflect on learning. Going back to the first day and pointing out the most essential steps of the sprint helps students to reflect on what happened during the design sprint. All the stages might feel like a blur to them, and it is important to remind them of the different stages.

Even if students have prior knowledge about service design and design thinking, experiencing a design sprint for the first time really shows them what it is all about. Following the concept of “learning by doing”, students can also get an additional task at the end to reflect on their learning journey. This could include a reflection of the initial expectations, highlights and pain points of the sprint with their group, ideas for improvement and also leaving space for more individual reflection of the sprint format. This can be presented either as a classical paper, but also in a much more creative way, for example in the form of video, audio, blog post, podcast, newspaper article, etc.

5. Lessons Learned

5.1 Advantages of a Design Sprint

The best thing about sprints is that the participants can learn from each other: cross-pollination with people from different departments (business) or degree programs (university), and the participants feel motivated with a real-world case from the industry. The business representatives giving the challenge may also gain a lot as they get customer / employer / stakeholder understanding of the target group as well as insight into how the

planned service is perceived. The participants can also use the method for future product development in their places of work.

Further, through a design sprint, it is possible to learn the 21st Century skills of collaboration, communication, complex-problem solving and critical thinking, which are much sought after by employers.

It is preferable to conduct the sprint in person. Some days (e.g. Day 4 and Day 5) can be combined to make the sprint into a 3 or 4-day training. However, at least one day to present the challenge by the local business representative will be necessary, as students will need time to do research (desk research and interviews, observations, etc.). The challenge can be done in just 3 to 5 days in a row, or it is possible to have breaks in between. Having a break after the first day with the introduction to the challenge and first interviews may be preferable for learning purposes as the students can get homework and do more desk research and more interviews on their own. Note: Remember that the sprint is intensive in nature and time discipline is of great importance!

Teachers who carried out the sprints as part of the ENRICHER hubs project work package 5 (WP5) Business Case Challenges at their universities gained key insights into the sprint method and observed what students learned during the process. Here are some of their comments; more can be found in the university case descriptions in paragraph 5.2."

Students understood that rural accommodation should combine comfort, hospitality standards and authentic local experience. The sprint highlighted the importance of online visibility, quality of service, language skills and cooperation with other local tourism actors.

Students understood that sustainable tourism can be strengthened through the integration of local culture, traditions, gastronomy, and environmentally responsible practices.

Students especially appreciated the interactive methodology, practical examples, collaboration in teams and mentor support.

Feedback highlighted the value of real business cases, mentor guidance and practical prototyping activities. The case strengthened students' practical skills in research, communication and solution design. Students appreciated working on practical solutions that could support the promotion of local tourism businesses.

The sprint encouraged students to translate authentic local heritage into simple and attractive tourism communication.

Students understood that green and sustainable tourism can have a strong social impact when combined with inclusion and social economy principles.

5.2 Examples of Business Challenges

As mentioned, business challenges can vary widely. To provide an overview of the types of challenges, as well as the types of companies and solution formats, we collected examples from the first sprints conducted as Business Case Challenges within the ENRICHER hubs project at six target-country universities. In the boxes below, you will find some examples of these challenges, along with key insights from sprints conducted at universities in Georgia and Moldova.

Business Challenge example from Caucasus University

Type of company that gave the challenge: Hotel / Spa Resort

Type of challenge: Resort positioning, tourism experience development, intergenerational tourism, sustainability-oriented service innovation

Format of solution: Visitor experience and service improvement concepts

Key insights from the sprint:

The sprint demonstrated that students become significantly more engaged when working on real tourism business challenges in collaboration with industry representatives. At the same time, the process highlighted the importance of clear challenge framing, contextual understanding, and balancing creativity with business feasibility within a short Design Sprint format.

Business Challenge example from Akaki Tsereteli State University

Type of company that gave the challenge: Wine company

Type of challenge: Business Concept and Sustainable Product Design -The challenge focused on finding year-round green tourism solutions to overcome seasonality and better share the winery's cultural heritage.

Format of solution: Service and Experience Prototypes (harvest-independent activities, specifically structured year-round experiences such as wine education workshops and gastronomy-based storytelling experiences)

Key insight from the sprint:

The sprint proved that direct engagement with an authentic enterprise significantly enhances practical learning outcomes, while demonstrating that for small family-run wineries, innovative solutions must be simple, scalable, and highly focused on experience design to be feasible.



Business Challenge examples from University of Political and Economic European Studies „Constantin STERE" (USPEE)

CASE 1

Type of company that gave the challenge: Tourist complex (hotel and hospitality sector)

Type of challenge: Development of innovative tourism experiences, improvement of customer attraction strategies, and promotion of sustainable tourism services.

Format of solution: marketing and promotion ideas, customer experience improvement strategies, and concepts for tourism packages adapted to different categories of visitors

Key insight from the sprint:

Students understood the importance of combining tourism services with customer needs, digital promotion, and sustainable development practices. The sprint helped them realize how tourism businesses can create competitive advantages through innovation, collaboration, and authentic visitor experiences.

CASE 2

Type of company that gave the challenge: Festival” Cultural–Tourist Guesthouse

Type of challenge: Development of sustainable and green tourism activities for children and families, focused on eco-friendly outdoor experiences, nature-based recreation, and responsible family tourism.

Format of solution: Students proposed sustainable tourism ideas such as eco-friendly recreational areas, educational activities connected with nature, interactive outdoor games, and lake-based activities that promote environmental awareness while improving visitors' experiences.

Key insight from the sprint:

Students understood that green tourism and sustainability can be integrated into family tourism through nature-oriented experiences, environmental education, and responsible use of local resources. The sprint demonstrated how sustainable leisure concepts can strengthen the attractiveness, uniqueness, and long-term development of tourism destinations.

Business Challenge examples from Comrat State University

CASE 1

Type of company that gave the challenge: NGO, local community development organization

Type of challenge: Community-based tourism development, local identity promotion, cooperation between local actors

Format of solution: Concept of a community tourism route, storytelling ideas, communication and partnership plan

Key insight from the sprint:

Students understood that tourism development can be strengthened through community mobilization, local identity and cooperation between NGOs, local producers and tourism stakeholders. The sprint helped them see the role of civic organizations as connectors between community resources and future tourism products.

CASE 2

Type of company that gave the challenge: individual enterprise / museum

Type of challenge: development of cultural and educational children's tourism, preservation of local legends and intangible heritage, promotion of family tourism routes in rural Gagauzia.

Format of solution: Cultural-educational tourism project concept, children's thematic route, interactive quest "Follow the Legend!", storytelling programme, "Young Guide" initiative and creative workshops for schoolchildren and families.

Key insight from the sprint:

The sprint showed that a small village museum can become an active center for children's and family tourism when local legends, school activities, creative workshops and community partnerships are combined into one structured visitor experience.

Business Challenge example from Iakob Gogebashvili Telavi State University

Type of company that gave the challenge:

Dairy production “local cheese factory”, tourism service provider

Type of challenge:

Business strategy & marketing - specifically supporting the company to become a leading destination while increasing brand visibility, customer engagement, and marketing impact.

Format of solution:

Team-based strategic recommendations, SWOT analysis, research wall, and final business pitch presentation.

Key insight from the sprint:

Real business challenges significantly increased student engagement and practical learning, while providing the company with innovative, research-based recommendations and strengthening university–industry collaboration.



Business Challenge examples from Moldova State University

CASE 1

Type of company that gave the challenge: National tourism association / destination management stakeholder

Type of challenge: green tourism development, destination promotion, sustainable tourism practices

Format of solution: Sustainable tourism concept, promotional ideas, green tourism service / product.

Key insight from the sprint:

Students valued the interaction with tourism professionals and the opportunity to apply sustainability concepts to real tourism challenges.

Sprint encouraged teamwork, creativity and a better understanding of how green tourism can be promoted in Moldova.

CASE 2

Type of company that gave the challenge: winery

Type of challenge: Sustainable wine tourism, marketing and visitor experience development

Format of solution:

Marketing concept, tourism experience proposal, visual prototype / presentation Minecraft approach.

Key insight from the sprint:

The winery case helped students connect sustainability with authentic local experiences and rural tourism development. Students appreciated working on practical solutions that could support the promotion of local tourism businesses.

5.3 Tips for conducting Design Sprints from local Teachers

Teachers at target-country universities who conducted their first design sprints during the ENRICHER hubs project, wanted to share their experiences by offering tips on conducting business case challenges in the form of design sprints:

Ensuring that students understand the design sprint methodology is advisable. Most students were already familiar with design sprint tools as they had previously participated in the training course covering the topic. If students are not familiar with the design sprint method, additional session / training should be suggested.

Visits to participating businesses / stakeholders are advised as they are a very practical and helpful way to present the challenge and give students possibilities to observe, ask questions, and conduct interviews with the owners and / or staff on site. Interviews reveal insights that desk research may fail to provide. Semi-structured interviews uncovered hidden issues and customer expectations that could not be identified through desk research alone. However, there is flexibility to conduct interviews in different ways. The students visit the businesses / companies, or the owners / staff of the business / company can be invited for interviews.

It would be useful to ensure alignment of expectations with business partners (e.g., clarifying scope, level of detail, and feasibility of student outputs before the challenge starts) so that the expectations are not unrealistic.

There is mutual agreement that real cases increase motivation and engagement for students. Working with real business challenges significantly enhanced student motivation and improved the quality of proposed solutions.

During the desk research phase, the teams of students analyze literature and examples of good practices to support their solution ideas (this is where presence of at least one student in each team with good knowledge of English may be beneficial). The students work on research walls and brainstorm ideas. Challenge Mapping -"How Might We" problem-framing exercise can be used in practice.

Importance of coordinating interaction with stakeholders and aligning expectations between students and business owners can be challenging. It may be useful to remind stakeholders that final outputs are prototypes and concepts rather than fully validated business solutions. Prior identification of relevant entrepreneurs / businesses / companies, assistance in organization of interviews, prior experience of cooperation and even personal contacts can be helpful and advisable.

The mutual benefit of HEI-industry collaboration was highlighted by teachers. The Business Case Challenge confirmed that cooperation between HEIs and SMEs creates mutual value: companies receive fresh ideas and structured recommendations while students gain practical skills, confidence, and a deeper understanding of sustainable tourism entrepreneurship.

Testing with business partners is thought to improve quality of solutions as direct feedback from entrepreneurs allowed teams to refine concepts and ensure their

applicability in real business environments. This can be done in an iterative way with several feedback loops.

Usage of visual service design tools (CJM, Blueprints, personas) is advocated to improve clarity. Using service design tools helped structure customer experience analysis and strengthened the quality of final presentations.

Students needed more practice in pitching. Final presentations showed that students benefit from additional training in delivering short, clear pitches.

Time management emerged as a critical factor, given the intensive nature of the design sprint. Adhering to the agenda, maintaining student focus, ensuring timely task completion, and preventing prolonged or off-topic discussions proved to be effective strategies for managing time efficiently.

An essential principle of the sprint is that teams must generate their own ideas. Teachers need to find the right balance between offering support and maintaining student autonomy.

The short and intensive design sprint format is often regarded by some educators as particularly effective for non-formal training with stakeholders, such as established businesses, where participants possess in-depth knowledge of their operations and can fully engage in a focused, high-intensity process.

However, when working with students, a longer engagement period may be more appropriate. This allows for a deeper understanding of business contexts, more thorough exploration of alternative development pathways, and the creation of more well-founded and robust business proposals.

6. Conclusion

This Teacher's manual; **Guidelines for a Green Tourism Business Challenge** is designed to support educators in effectively guiding, mentoring, and evaluating students throughout the competition process. By outlining clear procedures, assessment criteria, and facilitation guidelines, the manual aims to ensure a fair, well-structured, and pedagogically meaningful experience for all participants.

The role of the teacher extends beyond supervision. Educators act as mentors who foster critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and ethical decision-making. Through active participation in the challenge, students gain valuable exposure to real-world business contexts while strengthening their analytical, communication, and leadership skills.

It is our hope that this manual will assist teachers in creating a supportive and engaging learning environment that promotes innovation, professionalism, and academic development. With consistent guidance and constructive feedback, the Business Case Challenge can serve as a highly effective platform for experiential learning and student growth.

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online version, especially the methods section:

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Annex 1



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QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TOURISM BUSINESSES

Identification of real business challenges for student projects
(Business Case Challenge)



1 Basic information about your business
(Name, type of activity, location)

2 Which sector best describes your activity?

Accommodation

Food & Beverage / Gastronomy

Tour operator / Travel agency

Wine tourism / Agro-tourism

Cultural / Event tourism

Other: _____

3 What are the main challenges your business is currently facing?
(You may select multiple options)

Marketing and promotion

Attracting customers / tourists

Seasonality

Digitalization / online presence

Service quality / customer experience

Sustainability / environmental impact

Staff / human resources

Other: _____

4 Please describe one specific problem or challenge you would like students to work on

5 What type of results would you expect from a student team?

New business ideas / concepts

Marketing strategy / branding

Digital solutions (social media, website, etc.)

Sustainable tourism solutions

Customer experience improvements

Other: _____

6 Do you have data or materials that could support student work?

Yes (statistics, reports, internal data)

Limited data available

No

7 Are you willing to interact with students during the project?

Yes (regular communication)

Occasionally

No

8 Are you interested in testing or implementing proposed solutions?

Yes

Maybe

No

9 Contact person and details

10 Which sustainable practices are currently implemented in your business?
(You may select multiple options)

Use of local products and services (support of local producers)

Environmentally friendly practices (waste reduction, energy efficiency, water saving)

Promotion of local culture and heritage

Inclusion and accessibility (services for people with disabilities, inclusive employment)

Cooperation with local communities

Sustainable mobility solutions (e.g., cycling, low-carbon transport)

We are planning to introduce sustainable practices

Not currently implemented

Other: _____



Annex 2



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SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SELECTED TOURISM BUSINESS CASES

Purpose: Refinement of real business challenges and identification of sustainable solutions for the Business Case Challenge



1 Can you briefly describe your tourism business and your main target visitors?



- Type of services (accommodation, gastronomy, tours, activities, etc.)
- Key markets (local, national, international)
- Main client segments

2 What are the main challenges your business is currently facing in the tourism market?



- Seasonality
- Attracting tourists
- Digital visibility / marketing
- Service quality / customer experience
- Competition
- Staff / human resources
- Sustainability / environmental impact
- Other: _____

3 Which challenge is the most urgent for you at the moment and why?



(Helps define the core problem for the student team)

4 How do you currently address this challenge? What works well and what are the limitations?



- Current solutions / practices
- What works well
- What does not work / main limitations

5 What sustainable practices are already implemented in your business?



- Use of local products and services
- Eco-friendly operations (waste, energy, water, etc.)
- Promotion of local culture and heritage
- Inclusion and accessibility
- Cooperation with local communities
- Sustainable mobility
- Other: _____

6 Do you see opportunities to make your business more sustainable? What are the main barriers?



- Opportunities you see
- Main barriers (costs, lack of knowledge, seasonality, infrastructure, etc.)

7 What strengths or unique features of your business could support future development?



- Local identity / traditions
- Location / natural & cultural assets
- Partnerships / networks
- Team / experience / expertise
- Other: _____

8 What kind of solutions or support would you expect from a student team?



- New tourism product/service concept
- Sustainable / eco solutions
- Marketing & branding strategy
- Digital tools (social media, website, booking systems)
- Customer experience improvements
- Other: _____



THANK YOU!

Your insights help students develop practical and innovative solutions for a more sustainable tourism future.

INTERVIEW TIPS FOR STUDENTS

- Be respectful and a good listener.
- Ask open questions and avoid assumptions.
- Take notes (with permission) and thank the interviewee.
- Keep the interview between 20–30 minutes.

