

Creative Ideas for a Sustainable Eurovision Song Contest

Students from the HWR Berlin took part in the »The Big Enterprise Challenge« as part of »A Sustainable Eurovision 2023« at the University of Liverpool.

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The first sustainability challenge for the 30 students from different departments of the HWR was the mandatory train journey from Berlin to Liverpool, where they worked together with students from the University of Liverpool on new ideas and concepts for a more sustainable Eurovision Song Contest (ESC) as part of "The Big Enterprise Challenge".

Liverpool is this year's ESC venue and is well-known for its great music and cultural scene, being the birthplace of various famous musicians and bands such as The Beatles.

As this was a sustainability project, in order to participate in the project, students had to travel the distance from Berlin to Liverpool by train. The journey took about 14 hours and we had to change trains in Cologne, Brussels and London on the way. With an Interrail ticket, the connection was easy to plan. Fortunately, for most of us, the journey went smoothly and it felt good to travel more sustainably, plus there was plenty of time to get to know the other participants. HWR Berlin student Tizian Seidler reported that despite initial scepticism due to the length of the journey, he was ultimately very pleased to travel by train, because in contrast to flying, one could get to know the other participants better and spend more time with them.

On Monday the 17 of April at 11 a.m., the first day of the Challenge started for with a guided tour of the rainy but beautiful city of Liverpool. After a short lunch break, we went to "The Spine Building" of the University of Liverpool. There, we were warmly welcomed by the British students, the organising team and Culture Liverpool, the organisers of the ESC, and were then divided into 16 teams, each consisting of German and British students from different study programmes. Our task was to develop an innovative and creative idea as a team in the next 24 hours on how to make the ESC in Liverpool more sustainable. We were asked to focus on one of the following themes: Transport, Temporary Event Operations, Hospitality and Trade or Education and Culture, but were otherwise free to be creative and design our own idea. At the end of the challenge, the idea was pitched to a panel of business experts and then in the final to Culture Liverpool and the City Council.

On the first evening, the Challenge was opened by several speeches from the University of Liverpool, Culture Liverpool and Liverpool City Council. The background and purpose of the project was explained to us in detail, because the city of Liverpool wants to become climate neutral by the end of 2023 and therefore projects like "The Big Enterprise Challenge" are essential to achieve this goal with innovative ideas. First, we were introduced to our teams, mostly consisting of two HWR Berlin and four University of Liverpool students. Then we went straight into the project. For the idea development, we were introduced to the method of "Design Thinking" and applied it directly in practice. This means that we work on possible solutions based on

the problems of events like the Eurovision Song Contest. Therefore, on this evening we first thought about different problems such as waste or air pollution and then discussed them in detail.

On the second day, we started again with these problems in the morning and began to concentrate on one of these problems and to develop a possible solution. For the entire time, we were supported by the organisers of the Challenge and were introduced to some tools that would help us to create our pitches, such as skills in project management, design thinking, convergent thinking or the Scamper model. We were also given the great opportunity to pitch our business idea to three business experts from Liverpool each to get feedback from them and ask questions. This helped us enormously in the development process and it was very exciting to get to know different perspectives.

Two days is very little time to think up a new product or service and prepare a business pitch, but this time pressure spurred us on to work even more effectively to complete the presentation of our idea in the allotted time. In the first pitch round, each team had to present their idea in a five-minute presentation in front of a jury of business experts and it was very interesting to hear what exciting ideas the other groups had worked on. Afterwards, we went to the nearby Baltic Hotel, where we were welcomed with pizza and drinks to toast our work together, celebrate and network further before the four finalists were announced. They then had another 10 minutes or so to prepare for their final three-minute pitch, which also had to be delivered in front of the organisers, some members of Culture Liverpool and the City Council.

First place in the challenge went to the team with the idea of including a public transport ticket in the ESC ticket to encourage visitors to use buses and trains instead of cars or taxis. Some other ideas that came out of this project were, for example, a compostable toilet made of bamboo, an add-on for the Eurovision app that allows visitors to calculate their individual CO₂ footprint, and an automatic garbage bin robot that should keep the Eurovision Village tidy and improve the recycling system. All participants did a really great job and the ideas could not have been more different and interesting and it was a great feeling that we could really achieve something with our ideas and our work.

After this successful end of the Challenge, many of us sat together in a pub or restaurant, which gave us the opportunity to meet new people from different semesters and courses of study. Many new acquaintances and even friendships were made and it was exciting to observe how quickly you can become familiar with people who were strangers only 24 hours ago when you work so intensively together on a joint project as a team.

Overall, I would recommend taking part in such a project to anyone and would always take part in such a project again, as the challenge and especially the collaboration with the British students was a lot of fun. This experience and the opportunity to be a part of a sustainability project that can really have an impact is something we all will definitely never forget and the many useful skills and tools, such as project development, design thinking and presenting were greatly improved by most of the participants during this time. The intercultural competence should also not be underestimated as it is urgently needed for projects in which so many different nationalities and cultures come together. Culturally, there are different ways of working and approaching things, which often leads to conflicts, misunderstandings or other difficulties but in the end, despite all the challenges, all the teams succeeded in presenting an idea to the jury. And if we are honest, without these difficulties it would not be a Challenge.