

Sustainable Innovation Challenge #Berlinnovation2024

For the second time in a row, students from HWR Berlin took part in the University of Liverpool's Sustainable Innovation Challenge.

03.07.2024 — Lina Nientimp & Jana Baier-Kohl

This year, the international cooperation project took place in Berlin on 12 and 13 June 2024 under the title #Berlinnovation2024. A total of 48 students from the University of Liverpool and Ulster University Belfast travelled to Berlin to meet 20 students from HWR Berlin.

The Challenge

In the Sustainable Innovation Challenge, students in cross-university teams are presented with a real-life challenge on the topic of sustainable international business. They have one day to develop innovative solutions and then present their ideas to a jury of business experts. This year's practice partner, Handshake, set the task of developing a new product, service or activity to promote interpersonal relationships between different target groups and users of Handshake.

The University of Liverpool took the lead in developing the content of the challenge. The Careers & Employability team went to great lengths to present informative and stimulating content to generate interest and ideas that would lead to sustainable solutions in line with the United Nations SDGs.

The programme

On Wednesday morning, the students from the UK were given a short cultural programme, in which some HWR students also took part and where the international guests were able to gain a first impression of the city and their fellow students.

In the afternoon, the practice partner Handshake introduced itself and announced the challenge. Initial ideas were discussed in the mixed student teams and the day was rounded off with a joint dinner.

On Thursday morning, the students were introduced to some methods of design thinking and creative problem solving, which they could apply directly in the subsequent group phase. The students developed their products and received support from various employers, such as Enterprise Car Rental, Alstom, Bodyswaps and CDP Europe, from several alumni and from Christian Klang, lecturer and start-up coach at HWR Berlin. They all shared valuable insights and experiences to promote the design thinking process.

The student teams presented their pitch to the jury in two rounds. Two teams faced each other in the final.

The theme of interpersonal relationships featured strongly in all ideas for the group work, with mentoring, peer and employer contacts proving important to the students. The final presentations from the student teams were fabulous and very inspiring.

The team that ultimately won the challenge had developed a 'MentorHub'. The product is centered on the use of mentors to help students prepare for the job market.

Experiencing international collaboration at first hand

The students benefited from this challenge in many ways - they networked internationally, made friends, shared ideas, knowledge and experiences, worked creatively and innovatively and had a lot of fun.