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# Results of exchange & learning mobility activities of student/business collaboration in green venturing

Dr. Frans Stel

Vennebroek Academic Services

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## EDITOR

Vennebroek Academic Services  
Vennebroek 12  
9472RD Zuidlaren  
T: 00316 558 61 774

[stel@createnewbusiness.com](mailto:stel@createnewbusiness.com)  
[www.createnewbusiness.com](http://www.createnewbusiness.com)

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# Learning Mobility Report: Exchange activities

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

In the S4S-project, we organized teaching programmes and modules on collaborative green venturing. We aimed to develop the mind-sets and skills concerning sustainable entrepreneurship. We developed and tested new international multidisciplinary, learner-centered and real problem-based programs in which students collaborated with business partners. Participants have gained a more realistic view of the opportunities and challenges to conduct new green ventures. This increases the chance that students will become green entrepreneurs, will create new jobs and will develop innovative solutions to meet Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In the S4S project we developed good practice green venturing examples. Our innovative approaches and tools can be used in different university settings. We provide toolkits to implement student-business collaboration in green venturing. Teaching staff and program managers can adapt and apply the results of the S4S-project as a stepping-stone of innovative teaching and learning offerings, which makes them more competitive in attracting (inter)national students.

We stimulated the exchange flow of knowledge between HEIs and enterprises to increase the quality and success rate of eco-innovation and green venturing projects. We involved students from different nationalities in the exchange activities. Innovation managers, venturing managers and sustainability managers can use the S4S-results as well. Learning experiences have been evaluated and documented and been used to improve exercises in collaborative green venturing. Our results are published in [electronic reports on our website](#) and on our [S4S-platform](#).

Due to the Corona-pandemic, we were forced to conduct most of our learning mobility activities digitally instead of originally planned on campus.

We conducted five transnational challenge activities: (1) *Againity Business Expansion Challenge*; (2) *Circular Challenges*; (3) *Fujifilm Future Challenge*; (4) *Negotiation Festival*; and (5) the project “*Role of ecosystem as enablers of upscaling in the upcycling industry*”.



## 1.2 OVERVIEW

In total, 521 students, 71 academic staff members and 68 business staff took part in the transnational challenge activities, as are specified in the table below:

	<b>Students involved</b>	<b>Teaching Staff</b>	<b>Business staff</b>
<i>Againity Business Expansion Challenge</i>	165	7	3
<i>Circular Challenges</i>	56	10	10
<i>Fujifilm Future Challenge</i>	123	37	19
<i>Negotiation Festival</i>	72	8	6
<i>Ecosystem as enablers of upscaling in the upcycling industry</i>	6	6	20
<i>Sustainable Development Game</i>	18	3	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>440</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>58</b>

*Table 1: Involvement of target groups in transnational challenge activities*

## 1.3 MAIN OUTCOMES

In the [\*Againity Business Expansion Challenge\*](#), students identified 165 cleantec go-to-market opportunities. They identified potential partners for international business expansion in multiple countries. Students experienced with high level of technology to meet both academic and company requirements. As a result, the students developed a better understanding of the complexity of real international business expansion in the (clean)tech industry.

In the [\*Circular Challenges\*](#), 7 new business ideas were co-created in international teams of students with high entrepreneurial attitude. These teams were coached by S4S-business partners. The participants appreciated and considered the circular challenges as useful and enjoyable. Participants gained new experience and a deeper understanding of circular businesses. They learned how to work with people from different backgrounds and solving real case studies with out-of-the-box creativity. They understood that in a short time creating innovative and real solutions was possible.

In the [\*Fujifilm Future Challenge\*](#), 47 new business ideas were developed. Students developed their innovative skills in a real high-tech setting. To improve the innovativeness of the business ideas, we offered training, and developed new tools. In learning communities, participants were able to learn from each other on an international scale using new digital tools. We concluded that commitment and team processes are the strongest predictors of new venture performance. We elaborated a new and



detailed organizational playbook, including new scripts, templates of business models, and new tools (e.g. a so-called “progress monitor”) and new systematic approaches of ideation and customer validation.

In the [\*Negotiation Festival\*](#), participants improved their negotiation skills in an international business setting. Participants gained an increased understanding of the dynamics of negotiations task & relationship related issues, and more awareness and skills concerning distributive (“zero sum”) and integrative (“win-win”) negotiation contexts. Additionally, they achieved new insights in the drivers and blockers of international partnerships.

In the project [\*“Ecosystem as enablers of upscaling in the upcycling industry”\*](#), three students teams conducted cases studies at S4S-partner companies. We organized several virtual international discussion sessions in order to make a cross-country and cross-case analysis. The self-starting student teams (i.e. teams that show a lot of initiative) were very satisfied and motivated and have received the grades “excellent” (Sweden); and 8 - 8.5 of Master theses (on a 0-10 scale in The Netherlands). As a result of the project, we could refine the “engagement diagram” (Oskam, I. (2020). *Shaping Sustainable business models, stakeholder collaboration for sustainable value creation. PhD thesis, VU University Amsterdam, The Netherlands.*).

We concluded that upscaling is firm specific and that support from external actors (e.g. trade organizations, academic institutions) is crucial is for upscaling. In addition, upscaling depends upon entrepreneurs’ vision on circularity. General growth strategies of upcycling businesses are rare, organic growth is the norm. We plan to derive an academic paper from our experiences.

In the virtual workshop [\*“Sustainable Business Development game”\*](#), we asked students to prioritize sustainable priorities. In break-out rooms they discussed their highest priorities and they operationalized one team. This was a research-based learning activity; the priorities were linked to ecological concerns. The results were combined with other on campus workshops resulting in a research paper that has been presented at the AOM Management conference 2021. In total 18 students participated in this workshop and 3 teaching staff.

### **Lessons learned and future plans**

In the *Aginity Business Expansion Challenge*, we learned to improve tutor feedback in many individual assignments “business expansion” projects. We developed a digital exchange of knowledge with the company. More attention should be given to the feedback loop from students to case companies (time-plan, expected deliverables etc.). In the future, we want to organize a “best-off” presentation and feedback session with the company. Moreover, we want to involve tutors more in the preparations to help increase the quality of their guidance and students’ learning/end-product. We can improve the case introduction through a recorded video followed by Q&A session.

In the *Circular Challenges* students learned that even in a relatively short time creating innovative and real solutions is possible. We learned that even well-established companies struggle with implementing circularity. Although time pressure is part of the challenge, more time is appreciated and therefore, more attention towards time management is needed. In the future, we aim to supply more content, for example by adding a toolkit to structure ideas, and involve more aspects in the challenges. We want to detail company information more and include consumer viewpoints more explicitly. Furthermore, we want to supply students with the possibility to network with companies.



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We expect to build on our experiences in the forthcoming short-term programs of the “Challenge4Impact: Developing partnerships for International Virtual Student Business Challenges in Sustainable Entrepreneurship” Erasmus+ project (2022 – 2024)

In the *Fujifilm Future Challenge*, we want to give more attention to team building, before the challenge program starts. We will include more (formalized) coaching and will intensify communication with the coaches and the teams. We will supply content on demand and substitute the plenary sessions to small instruction modules (videos + exercises). We will keep the focus on highly entrepreneurial / highly motivated students by including motivation interviews to recruit and select participants. We plan to add more team diversity and a larger scale in order to increase the sustainable impact (business/tech/creative disciplines, nationalities).

The content of the *Negotiation Festival*, was perceived as relevant according to the participants; they appreciated the event (score 7.3 on a 0-10 scale) and were highly committed (score 8.0). For further upscaling, some organizational changes are required; the current program is too long to conduct simultaneously in multiple time zones (Europe/Asia/US). In the future, we intend to spend more attention to cultural / religious aspects (e.g. prayer time etc.). The Negotiation festival will be repeated in different forms: for example, focus on alliance formation, cross-cultural negotiation exercises etc.

The collaboration concept of the *“Ecosystem as enablers of upscaling in the upcycling industry”* was appreciated. This educational concept requires drive of academic staff members to organize. The concept is mainly suitable at Master level. We learned that sometimes only a limited upscaling is desired and that optimal scales in the upcycling industry varies: big is not always beautiful! Entrepreneurs create like-minded partners in their eco systems; partner selection limits upscaling. We concluded the distinction between purpose driven and scale driven business is relevant to our project theme.



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