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INSPIRE

Improving Networks and Services to Promote Innovative and Resilient Entrepreneurship

Business support programme – implementation guide

2025/2026

The content of this material does not necessarily represent the official position of the EU.

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Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION 4

1 WHAT'S INCLUDED – AND WHY? 6

1.1 Key competences and their place in education 6

1.2 Content of the curriculum 9

1.2.1 Module 1 – Entrepreneurial mindset 10

1.2.2 Module 2 – Product and service development 12

1.2.3 Module 3 – Marketing and customer acquisition 14

1.2.4 Module 4 – Human resources and team building 15

1.2.5 Module 5 – Financial planning 16

1.2.6 Module 6 – Practical guide to administration 16

1.2.7 Module 7 – Presentation and pitch techniques 17

2 IMPLEMENTATION – HOW TO APPROACH IT 19

2.1 The testing process 19

2.2 Variations on a theme 23

2.3 Summary of test results 29

BIBLIOGRAPHY 30

Introduction

The INSPIRE project tackles the following joint challenges of the cross-border area:

- Encouraging young people to become entrepreneurs is a good way to address the issue of youth unemployment; however, **starting a business is** a **risky** endeavour: survival rate after the second year is low in both countries, caused partly by a **lack of knowledge, skills, community** (including partners)**, and adaptability**.
- Entrepreneurs looking for support can easily get lost in the **segmented service market** where financial means, administrative assistance, and know-how related to businesses come from different directions, some of them hard to find.
- The business support service providers often run **parallel initiatives** with the same goal – or different initiatives that would fit together as a service package – but **with no cooperation** between them. As a result, the impact of their activities are muted, mostly local – less likely to be significant and long-lasting.

In line with these challenges, the main objective of INSPIRE is **improving institutional capacities to provide high quality and effective business support** for entrepreneurs in the cross-border area **by** (1) **increasing collaboration between business support service providers** on both sides – and across – the border, **and** (2) **improving the survival rate and viability of new businesses** operated by young entrepreneurs.

These objectives will be reached by implementing the following activities:

- **Mapping** the relevant organizations and services, and identifying specific collaboration areas based on the **overlaps and gaps in the cross-border service offer**, resulting in a **joint analysis**
- Creating a **catalogue with relevant good practices** that are adaptable by organizations in the cross-border area
- **Matching the overlaps and gaps with the gathered good practices** in the form of an **action plan**, which will include the **detailed description of "quick wins"** (actions achieving maximum impact with minimum resources)
- Disseminating the deliverables mentioned above and facilitating real connections between representatives of business support organizations by **organizing online and face-to-face networking events**
- **Developing and testing a business support programme** for aspiring entrepreneurs, focusing on knowledge exchange, practical assistance, and skills development
- Sharing the results of the project and facilitating networking between the two target groups (business support organizations and future entrepreneurs) by **organizing a final conference**

The **business support programme** mentioned above has several components:

- **Curriculum** – The partners created **presentations** with the help of external experts, **covering seven topics** related to entrepreneurship. The slides are **freely and publicly shared** through the partners' communication channels to support wide dissemination and reuse of the materials.
- **Implementation guide** – This document serves as a short guide **to anyone who might be interested in adapting the programme** to their own needs (teachers wanting to cover these topics in their classes, labour market organizations planning to offer workshops to job seekers to boost their employability, etc.).
  - *Chapter 1* presents the **theoretical background** regarding entrepreneurial competences, **justifying the selection of topics** by the partners, but also **summarizing the modules** of the programme.
  - *Chapter 2* describes the **testing conditions** set up in the framework of INSPIRE and provides guidance on the variety of **ways the materials could be reused** by other stakeholders.
- **Pilot programme** – The partners will test the materials in **two occasions**: one in Hungary in November 2025, and one in Romania at the beginning of 2026. **Learnings from these events will be incorporated into the above components** by modifying them (if necessary) **until the middle of March 2026** – the revised materials will be reshared after that.

1 What's included – and why?

1.1 Key competences and their place in education

The EU reference framework for lifelong learning lists *"Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship"* as 1 of 8 key competences[1] a person needs to have. When defining entrepreneurship, it uses the same wording as the Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan: *"an individual's ability to turn ideas into action"*. The Danish Foundation for Entrepreneurship & Young Enterprise suggested an extended definition:

"Entrepreneurship is when you act upon opportunities and ideas and transform them into value for others. The value that is created can be financial, cultural, or social."

As a result, it's not surprising that the European Commission stated in 2012 that *"investing in entrepreneurship education is one of the highest return investments Europe can make"*. 15-20% of students who participate in an entrepreneurship programme during their secondary education will later start their own company – this number is about 3 to 5 times higher than in the general population. Moreover, **essential entrepreneurship competences will equip people for not only successful self-employment but also *any* kind of employment**.

Despite this fact, **most education systems do not offer the right foundation for an entrepreneurial career**. In some cases, young people finish their studies without ever learning anything about creating a business or taking initiative, so it is not surprising that as young adults, they are not aware of the opportunities available to them to implement their ideas. **Hungary and Romania are not exempt from this.**

- Young people in Hungary usually do not receive any entrepreneurship training before the age of 18 and the national education system is more prepared to impart vast amounts of lexical knowledge than to use collaborative/team- and project work with the students. Even at university level, traditional teaching methods persist – there are a few refreshing exceptions but not enough to change the overall result described above.
- In Romania, schools and universities do put some effort into providing business education – there is a compulsory entrepreneurial material for high school students since 2014, after all –, but being an entrepreneur requires different competencies (e.g., critical thinking skills) than what schools provide (i.e., formulas about how things *should* be done).

[1] The other 7 are Communication in the mother tongue, Communication in foreign languages, Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology, Digital competence, Learning to learn, Social and civic competences, and Cultural awareness and expression.

Even if both countries would immediately dedicate themselves to the effort of creating a mandatory learning plan about entrepreneurship, they would run into a problem: **identifying what to include**. When trying to pin down the competencies needed for a successful entrepreneurial career, a segmented professional environment awaits – experts disagreeing on their exact nature, level of importance, and definition. However, there is a key fact most of them agree on: **entrepreneurial competence is a combination of knowledge, skills, and attitudes**. Under these three categories, several competencies can be distributed in various ways – one of them is shown in the table below.

1 Entrepreneurial knowledge, skills, and attitudes

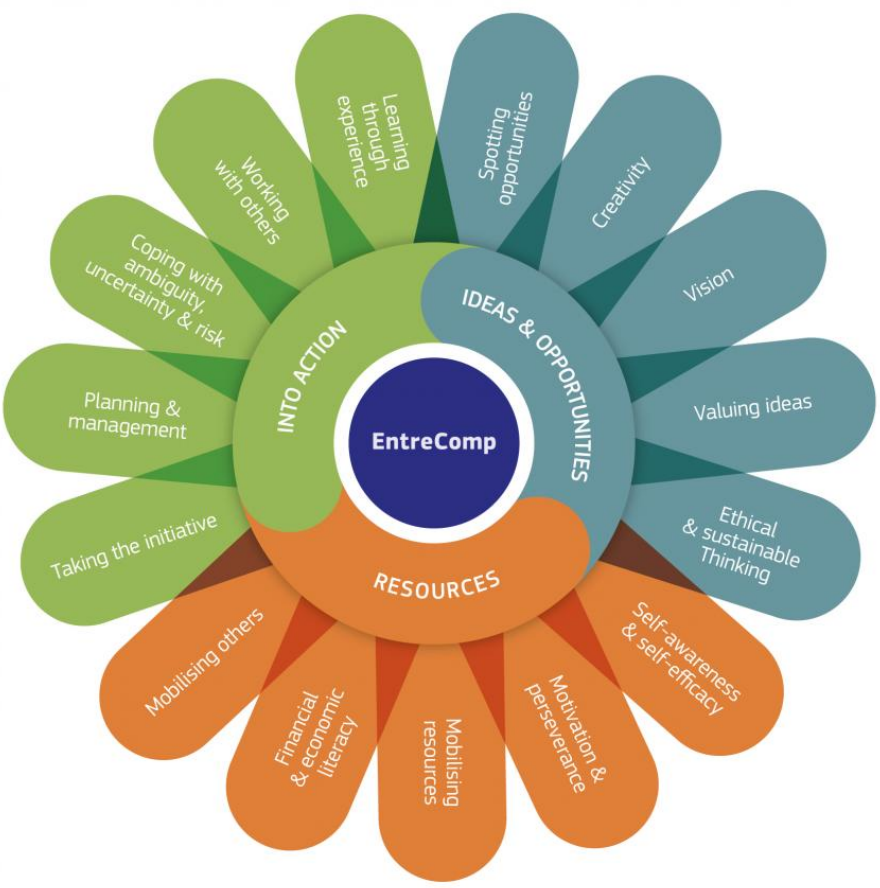
Knowledge	Declarative knowledge	Basics of entrepreneurship (e.g., accounting, finance, technology, marketing)
	Self-insight	Knowledge of personal fit with being an entrepreneur
Skills	Marketing skills	Conducting market research, persuasion, dealing with customers, communicating a vision…
	Resource skills	Creating a business/financial plan, obtaining resources
	Opportunity skills	Recognizing and acting on business opportunities
	Interpersonal skills	Leadership, managing people, resolving conflict…
	Learning skills	Active learning, adapting to new situations
	Strategic skills	Setting priorities & goals, developing a strategy, identifying partners
Attitudes	Entrepreneurial passion	Need for achievement *(I want)*
	Self-efficacy	Belief in one's ability to succeed *(I can)*
	Entrepreneurial identity	Core beliefs and values *(I am)*
	Proactiveness	Action-oriented, proactive *(I do)*
	Uncertainty/ambiguity tolerance	Adaptable, open to surprises *(I dare)*
	Innovativeness	Unpredictable, visionary, creative *(I create)*
	Perseverance	Ability to surmount obstacles in the way of progress *(I overcome)*

Source: Lackéus, 2015

The Joint Research Centre of the EU Science Hub has come up with a different categorization which follows the definition of entrepreneurship more closely. The 3 main competence areas (Ideas and opportunities, Resources, and Into action) directly mirror the process of *"turning ideas into action"*.

- *Ideas and opportunities* include (1) **spotting** opportunities, (2) developing **creative ideas**, (3) working towards a **vision**, (4) recognizing the **potential** an idea has for creating value, and (5) assessing the **consequences** of ideas to act responsibly.
- *Resources* include (1) **self**-awareness & self-efficacy, (2) motivation & perseverance, (3) resource **gathering & management**, (4) **financial & economic know-how**, and (5) **stakeholder mobilisation**.
- *Into action* includes (1) taking the **initiative**, (2) **planning and management**, (3) coping with **uncertainty/risks**, (4) **teamwork**, and (5) continuous **learning by doing**.

2 Conceptual model of entrepreneurship competence (EntreComp)



Source: Joint Research Centre, 2016

1.2 Content of the curriculum

The INSPIRE partners used the combination of both categorizations mentioned in Chapter 1.1, creating a curriculum that is **not all-encompassing but still representative** of the relevant knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

3 Modules covering key entrepreneurial knowledge, skills, and attitudes and EntreComp competence areas

			Relevant modules
Knowledge	Declarative knowledge	Basics of entrepreneurship (e.g., accounting, finance, technology, marketing)	3, 5, 6
		Financial & economic literacy	
		Planning & **management**	
	Self-insight	Knowledge of personal fit with being an entrepreneur	1
		Self-awareness & self-efficacy	
Skills	Marketing skills	Conducting market research, persuasion, dealing with customers, communicating a vision…	3, 7
		Mobilising others	
	Resource skills	Creating a business/financial plan, obtaining resources	5
		Mobilising resources	
	Opportunity skills	Recognizing and acting on business opportunities	2
		Spotting opportunities	
	Interpersonal skills	Leadership, managing people, resolving conflict…	4
		Mobilising others	
		Working with others	
	Learning skills	Active learning, adapting to new situations	1
		Learning through experience	
	Strategic skills	Setting priorities & goals, developing a strategy, identifying partners	1, 3
		Planning & management	

Attitudes	Entrepreneurial passion	Need for achievement *(I want)*	1
		Vision	
	Self-efficacy	Belief in one's ability to succeed *(I can)*	1
		Self-awareness & **self-efficacy**	
	Entrepreneurial identity	Core beliefs and values *(I am)*	1
		Ethical & sustainable thinking	
	Proactiveness	Action-oriented, proactive *(I do)*	1, 2, 3
		Taking the initiative	
		Learning through experience	
	Uncertainty/ambiguity tolerance	Adaptable, open to surprises *(I dare)*	1
		Coping with ambiguity, uncertainty & risk	
	Innovativeness	Unpredictable, visionary, creative *(I create)*	1, 2
		Creativity	
		Valuing ideas	
	Perseverance	Ability to surmount obstacles in the way of progress *(I overcome)*	1
		Motivation & perseverance	

Source: Lackéus, 2015 & Joint Research Centre, 2016 (with own editing)

The information is presented in the form of slides – the following subchapters summarize the **content** of the individual modules, highlighting the **key messages** and some **examples for exercises** that can convey them in the best way. The **order** of the modules here is based on a **logical progression from one topic to another** – any exception to this will be mentioned under the given section.

1.2.1 Module 1 – Entrepreneurial mindset

As an introduction to the topic, the first presentation material focuses on the **fundamentals** of entrepreneurship – **key personal characteristics** a person needs to cultivate to become a successful entrepreneur. Young people – if they are not exposed to real examples in their daily lives – often have unrealistic expectations when contemplating to starting a business. Evaluating whether they are ready to do that is mostly relegated to financial factors – however, some personality traits can have a significant impact as well on their ability to succeed.

- **Commitment and perseverance**

  Not every business becomes successful quickly – as a matter of fact, it's rare to not have challenges when starting a company. If the founder doesn't have a **vision** that they want to pursue and is easily demotivated by early failures, they might close down in the face of problems instead of **adapting** to an unexpected situation.

- **Self-confidence and adaptability**
  Following the previous point, it's more likely to succeed as an entrepreneur if the entrepreneur itself believes in their ability to do so and presents a **flexible attitude** when implementing their business plan.
- **Risk tolerance**
  Every business carries its own risks – **there are factors an entrepreneur can manipulate to their advantage with careful and clever planning**, but outside factors might change as well and some can be beyond the ability of one person to fix or even just adapt to. A good entrepreneur should be able to differentiate between these two categories, affecting the former and **preparing** for the latter **with mitigation techniques**, for example. At the end of the day, **some risks can be calculated, but not all – uncertainty is part of the process**.
- **Creativity and innovation**
  In today's saturated market, a new company must present a truly **unique value proposition to attract customers** – unless the field it operates in is completely new (which is rare), there is always competition. Offering a **creative and innovative solution to an existing problem** guarantees the potential customers' attention, which then can be turned into loyalty by delivering what was promised.
- **Leadership skills and teamwork**
  A new entrepreneur usually works alone but this might not be for long – there will come a time when other people are needed to operate the business, and they must be **properly directed and motivated** to do that well. These skills are the least likely to be taught in schools, but they are really important to **create a workplace environment that encourages creativity and productivity**. It was deemed important enough by the project partners, that leadership styles and techniques are present in more detail in Module 4.

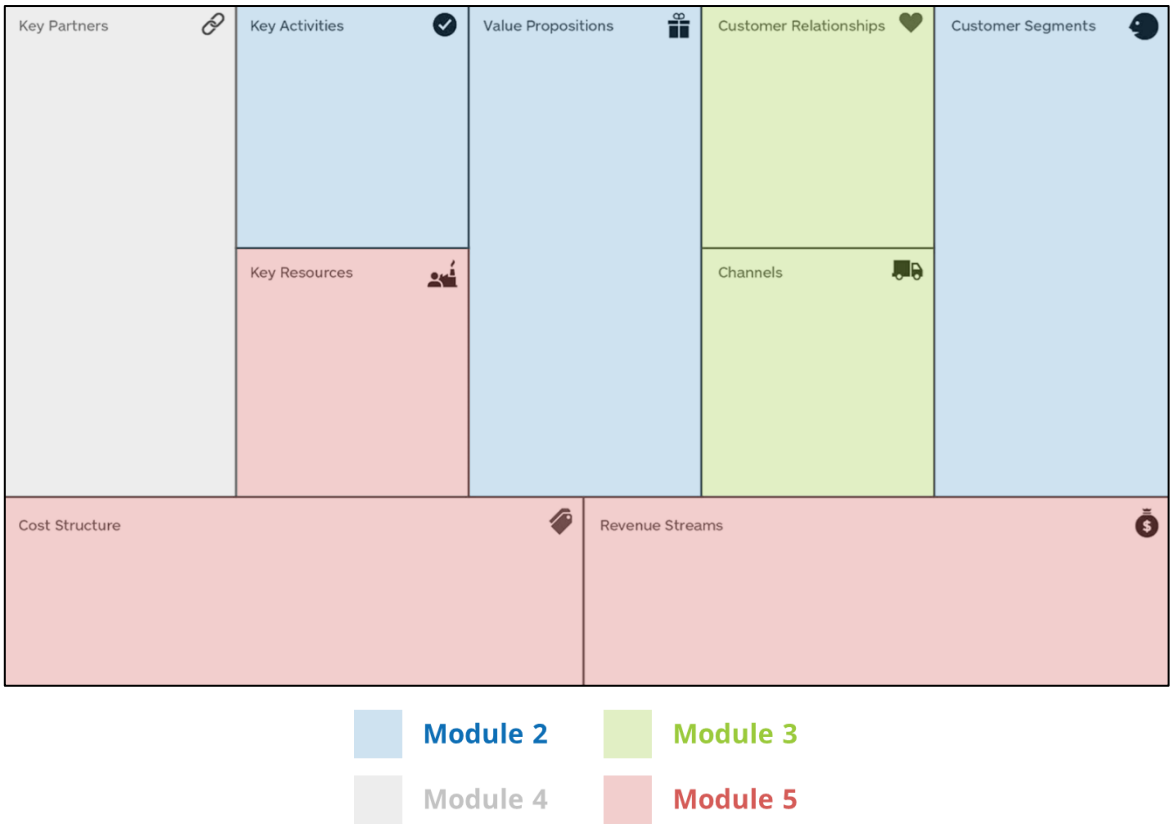
Module 1 also describes – in broad strokes – the **stages of starting and operating a company** (to set up the content of the other modules), highlighting the importance of research, sound business planning, and sustainability. However, at this point of the training a **less structured exercise** is recommended – something that urges the participants to evaluate their own personality and skills and identify things they should improve. Asking them to define their **top 3 entrepreneurial strengths and weaknesses** individually and then pairing them for a discussion is an easy way to get them thinking, but a **questionnaire**[2] **created in Slido or Mentimeter** and answered by them in real time could also be an interesting way to see the composition of the group.

[2] A thorough **competency survey** was developed in the **ROHU-382 YES project** with **high school students** in mind – it might spark some ideas on how to approach the topic with other target groups as well.

1.2.2 Module 2 – Product and service development

Modules 2-5 can be called the **core content of the business support training** – they **lead the participants through the creation of a business plan**. The INSPIRE partners used the **Business Model Canvas as a basis** – a visual, easy-to-understand template that is particularly useful to summarize a business idea and spot any inconsistencies. Practical exercises connected to these modules should be centred around the Canvas, guiding the aspiring entrepreneurs to think through their business idea. They can **work individually or in groups** – the former is better if they have immediate plans to launch their business (since they might not be comfortable to share their idea with anyone else), while the latter can be motivating in case of trainings where the participants wish to develop their entrepreneurial competencies but without any solid ideas for a future business.

4 Connection between the Business Model Canvas and the core modules of the INSPIRE business support training



Source: own editing

The key concept of Module 2 is the **design thinking methodology** – a systematic approach to creative problem-solving which is **iterative, user-focused, and participative**. It follows the process of ***discovering*** (and understanding) the target group and their core problem, and then ***designing*** and ***delivering*** a viable, feasible, and desirable solution.

5 Stages of design thinking



Source: own editing

DISCOVERING: The presentation places an emphasis on **problem analyis –** one of the key messages of this module is that *"if we don't understand the essence of the problem, the solution we create is doomed to failure"*. The participants should get familiar with different methods and steps of problem analyis:

- Creating a **user persona** helps to define customer segments that might have different needs and problems.
- Using a **problem tree** visualizes the causes and effects of a challenge potential customers struggle with, making it clearer where a product/service can come in and provide an effective solution.
- Mapping out a **user journey** unearths pain points of a process which could be targeted by a new product/service.

The main goal of these tools is **coming up with a value proposition**, answering the question: *"Why would a customer choose your solution over someone else's?"*.

DESIGNING: This section is all about **ideation**, presenting its main principles to the participants through **divergent, emergent, and convergent thinking** – complementary stages in the creative problem-solving process. Several methods are mentioned and discussed in the curricula: brainstorming (and its reverse), mind mapping, using a target board, etc. At the end of this stage in planning, **only a handful of ideas should remain** – those that are (1) **new and innovative** ways of (2) **solving the original problem** and (3) actually **feasible**.

DELIVERING: The only reliable way of creating a product/service that meets the needs and expectations of users is **prototyping and testing** it – coming up with a version that has enough functionality and other features for potential customers to use and provide feedback for further refinement. The presentation explains the difference between **Lo-Fi and Hi-Fi prototypes** and lists examples of **testing methods**.

1.2.3 Module 3 – Marketing and customer acquisition

Module 3 revisits some of the ideas of Module 2, elaborating on them in more detail – most importantly, **understanding what the customers want** is at the center stage, only this time it's from the point of view of promotion: **how to explain the product/service clearly** to the customers (highlighting its value), **how to deliver it to them**, and **how to keep their interest and build loyalty**. The presentation also explains the key features of a **company brand** – selecting a unique and fitting name, designing a timeless logo, and writing a memorable tagline.

The suggested exercise of this section is the **creation of a marketing plan** (or the beginnings of one). Defining the value proposition and the customer segments in Module 2 already covers the first steps and will provide a basis to understand the **strengths – marketing messages – that must be emphasized to the target group**. **SMART goals** should be **paired with corresponding actions and channels** (and a budget). Creating a **customer/user journey** could also come in handy here to imagine the process of them interacting with the product/service. In terms of channels, **social media** is emphasized as an unavoidable place for business promotion but not without restraint – **choosing platforms relevant to the target market** is a key learning of the curricula.

6 Steps of marketing planning



Relevant methods for the different steps: (1) **SWOT analysis** to evaluate the value proposition, (2) **user persona** to identify the characteristics of the given customer segment, (4) **SMART framework** to set marketing goals, and (5) **user journey** to model the process the customer will go through to hear/learn about the product/service and access it.

Source: own editing

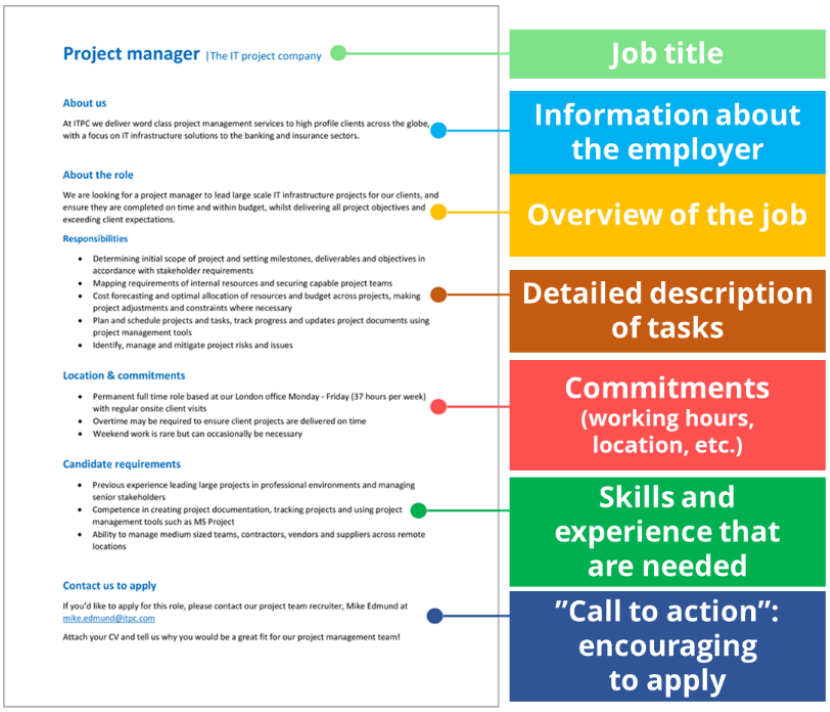
1.2.4 Module 4 – Human resources and team building

This module focuses on **finding the right people to work with** – mostly from the perspective of hiring employees, but the main principles can also be used to identify the right partners (e.g., suppliers). One of the key exercises could be connected to **writing effective job descriptions and devising the best way to screen applicants**:

- How to reveal **personality and communication style** through interviews;
- How to test **abilities and skills** through practical tests; and
- How to assess and understand **what drives the candidate**.

As a key entrepreneurship skill, leadership is discussed in more detail after its introduction in Module 1. Several **leadership styles** are explained and demonstrated through practical examples, including various **communication and conflict resolution scenarios** – some of these can serve as **role-playing exercises** at the end of the session.

7 Example of a job application



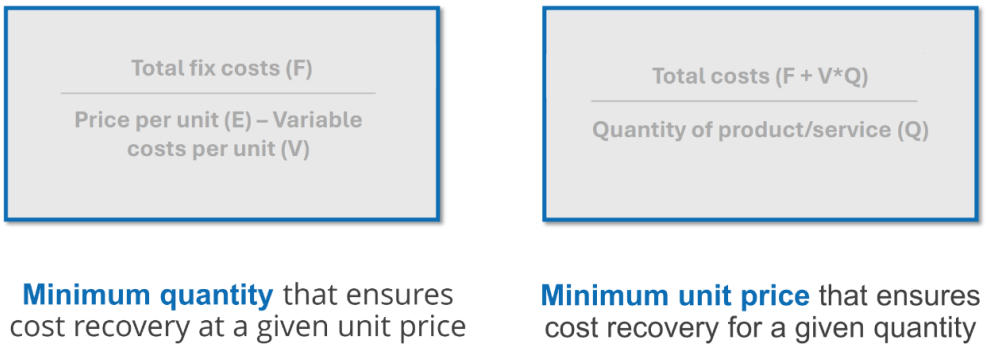
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1.2.5 Module 5 – Financial planning

This session is centred around the question: *"Can we sell our product/service at a price that will cover the costs **and** generate profit?"*. To assess this, the participants need to think through **pricing options** and then **calculate** all **the costs** necessary to start and operate the business they are planning to launch. Market research – once again – is emphasized as an important factor in determining the price customers are willing to pay for a given product/service, but the true focus of the module (and a possible exercise) is on identifying the real costs: those **that are directly related to the manufacturing/ delivery of the product or service, and those that are related to the operation of the business itself**. Although the material is mostly practical, some key definitions had to be included (e.g., break-even point, depreciation). This is also the first time when national differences in the cross-border area are presented, mostly through the **country-specific wages and corresponding taxes**.

One of the main learnings of this module is connected to the **cash flow**: managing it is arguably the hardest part of starting a business, and **if the entrepreneur doesn't have enough money to last at least the first six months without customers, their chances of success are slim**.

8 Two perspectives of calculating a break-even point



Source: own editing

1.2.6 Module 6 – Practical guide to administration

This module is a direct examination of the various **rules of creating and operating a company in Hungary and Romania**. The curricula attempts to address three questions:

- How can someone **establish** a business in these countries?
- What **legal forms** exist, and which one should be selected?
- What kind of **taxes** apply to entrepreneurs?

The slides present the answers with **corresponding links to** various **service providers and government agencies**. This is the only module where a **practical exercise is not recommended** – depending on the training, this session might even be skipped (e.g., in case of a workshop where the participants are not immediately about to launch a business, they might not need this information yet). Including a session dedicated to this module would be **beneficial in a training for people who are at the cusp of opening their business and need assistance in finding its best form and the right procedure** – even then, it's better to use the provided material **in the form of a lecture** where the participants can take notes and maybe look up the links for more details later.

1.2.7 Module 7 – Presentation and pitch techniques

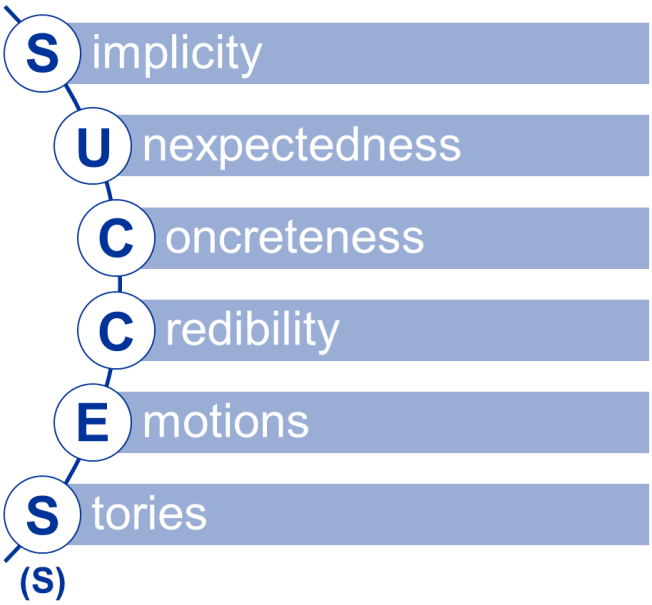
This session intends to prepare the participants for **pitching** their business idea **to investors**, but its content was curated to include **general presentation techniques and tips** as well. One key lesson of the YES project (and several projects since then) – and also the examination of the Hungarian and Romanian education system – is that **young people don't get enough opportunities during their studies to learn public speaking**. Combined with the fact that various levels of **glossophobia** – speech anxiety – are present prevalently in the population, **people being unprepared to express their ideas in a formal setting is a serious disadvantage** even to those who don't plan to become entrepreneurs later.

Therefore, the module has four sections.

- First, it explains how the **content** of a good presentation is made. Getting to know the **context** (location, timeframe, participants, etc.) is a priority, but before any editing work is done on a computer, the **main message** should also be determined to provide proper focus. This part of the curricula also describes a general presentation **structure**, with advice for each structural element.
- The next step is **visualization**. Here, a few guiding tips are shared to help with selecting pictures, adding colours, and simplifying for a clearer result.
- The third part of the module focuses on the presenter's **style** – how their eyes, voice, hands, and body should be used to emphasize the message and elevate the presentation to a higher quality.
- Lastly, the module provides useful suggestions about **handling questions and unexpected situations** (e.g., technical problems, delays). It leads the participants through **how a Q&A session works** – how to prepare in advance to unknown questions, how to coordinate the process, how to behave while the questions are asked, how to interpret the intent of the audience members, and how to answer the questions confidently and honestly.

To conclude the training and demonstrate the lessons of this module, the participants should be asked to **prepare and present a pitch** (individually or in groups, depending on the original decision regarding the practical exercises). In case of a **hackathon-like training** (where the participants are brought together and presented with the above information over a short amount of time and have to work quickly under pressure), Module 7 should be **placed after Module 1** – that way, the participants can keep its learnings in mind while working on their end goal during the other modules and not waste time by having to rethink their approach just before the pitch. However, if an institution decides to turn the training into **a programme over several weeks** (with one module per week, for example), it's better to **leave this module to be the last** and then provide ample time (i.e., at least one week) for the participants to combine their results into a pitch based on its suggestions.

9 Six principles of a successful presentation



Source: own editing

2 Implementation – how to approach it

2.1 The testing process

As mentioned before in the guide, the programme will be tested in the framework of the INSPIRE project at **two events with mixed participants from Hungary and Romania** – first in Nyíregyháza on November 7-8, 2025, and then in Oradea in January/February 2026. The testing centres around – and is affected by – the following facts:

THE CORE CONTENT MUST BE TAILORED TO THE PARTICIPANTS

In the Application Form of the project, the partners named young entrepreneurs as the core target group. However, by this designation they meant *"three types of people: (1) actual business owners… who are at the beginning of their operations…; (2) young people who are just about to start their business…; and (3) young people with an entrepreneurial mindset who have the potential and/or a plan to become entrepreneurs… can include young employees, unemployed, but even university students…"*. The content of the materials was designed to provide a **solid foundation for developing entrepreneurial competencies**, with sections that could be useful for every target group, albeit for different reasons (e.g., an entrepreneur with a 2-year old company who wants to find the right people to hire to grow their business will find the module about HR especially interesting, but knowing related methods will not go amiss in the case of the unemployed either who are on the other side of the hiring process currently). All in all, the curriculum **must be reviewed and tweaked for specific cases** – the partners plan to do the same before facilitating the first session in November, based on the composition of the registered participants[3]. As a result of the two events, they will be able to **determine whether the core content needs to be changed to become a stronger basis**.

IT CAN BE FAST-PACED OR PART OF A LONGER COURSE

The partners decided to organize **2-day events** where the participants are brought together and **stay for the duration** (i.e., they will have accommodations for one night and catering for two days). Therefore, the pace of the event will be somewhat **rushed** – this has two advantages: (1) it can be used to **demonstrate the fast pace of the business world** by forcing the participants to think quickly on their feet and adapt, (2) it will help the partners in **identifying what information is the most important to include while still keeping the planned timing**. The final documentation will include the original slides modified to fit these workshops to show what changes needed to be made. However, the partners decided on creating **modularized content** at the beginning to ensure that the

[3] The registration form includes a question about the status of the potential participants, making it easier to fit the slides to their needs (e.g., by including different examples and exercises, for example, or going deeper into a given topic).

curriculum **can also work in the form of consecutive classes**, for example, which would mean more time to get deeper into certain topics and for group work.

INCENTIVES COULD BOOST INTEREST IN PARTICIPATION

The INSPIRE partners must ensure that the required number of participants attend the workshop. On principle, the time the participants invest in it and the logistics involved (e.g., registration, travel) must be balanced with **clear benefits** – and promising (and later delivering) a high-quality programme is not enough. **Entrepreneurial competencies are highly sought-after**, but the partners decided to offer other incentives as well:

- The **language** of the workshop will be **English** which makes it the perfect opportunity for young people to **practice it in real-life conditions**, including listening (and understanding) lectures, speaking with the facilitators and other participants, and creating written materials during group work.
- The **info kit** of the programme was created to highlight not just the programme and the knowledge it offers but also the **atmosphere of the host city**, encouraging the participants to view the event as an **extended vacation with added benefits**.

10 Info kit of the INSPIRE workshop in Nyíregyháza, designed in Canva



Source: own editing

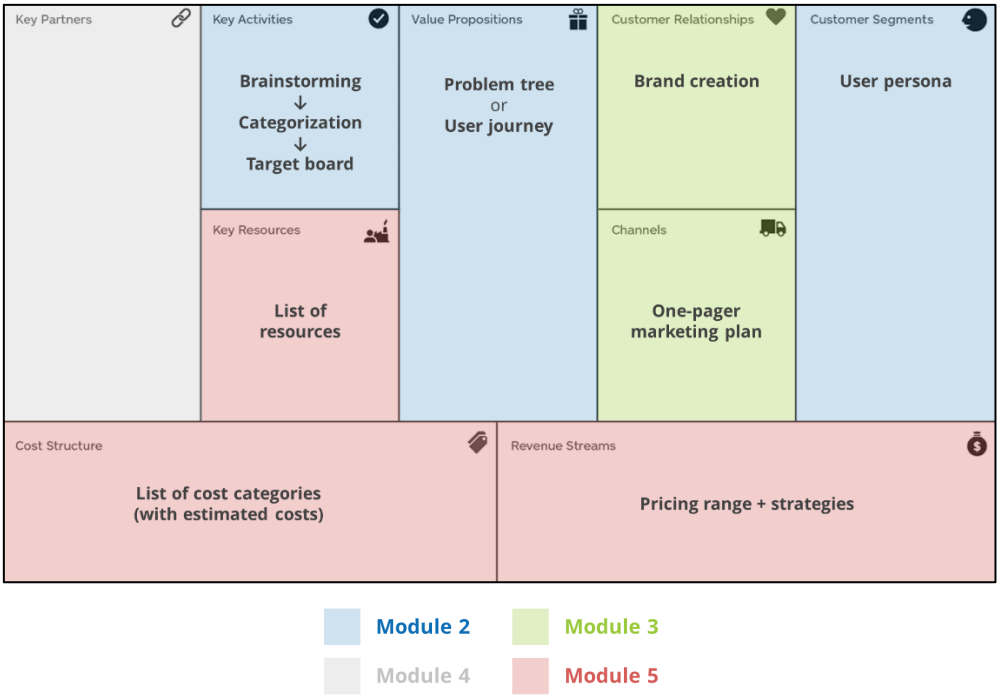
- The registration process **allows participants to group together in advance** – they can request to be in the same team with their friend(s) during the practical exercises, which might provide them familiarity in an unfamiliar location and situation. **Creating random groups** has the **added benefit** from a learning perspective **by forcing the participants to network and forge new connections**, but nevertheless, this concession was included here with the above sentiment in mind.

The agenda of the first workshop – and the order of the modules – is detailed below.

- **Friday morning** is planned to be about **introductions**, setting up the **framework** (i.e., groups, core focus, expected outcome), and creating an open **atmosphere**.
- **Friday afternoon** will be a very **intensive** section but includes a **lot of group work**. As mentioned in **Chapter 1.2.2**, the core modules follow the logic of the **Business Model Canvas** and support the participants in filling in its sections through various exercises.

DAY 1	**November 7** (Friday)
9:45 – 10:00	Arrival & registration
10:00 – 11:00	**Welcome, icebreakers** ➢ To provide visibility for the EU funding of the project, the **background of INSPIRE** must be introduced shortly, along with the **partners**. ➢ Next, the **facilitators** will introduce themselves and the **rules of engagement** for the workshop (including mutual respect when listening to each other but also what is expected as an outcome, in the form of a pitch). ➢ This is also the time for **creating groups** (or reinforcing pre-made ones) and mediating a couple of **exercises** so the participants can get to know each other and the facilitators. ➢ Since the **location** is a 2-story office building and every room can be utilized for group work, a **quick walkthrough** might also be incorporated into the agenda.
11:00 – 11:45	**SESSION 1 – ENTREPRENEURIAL MINDSET** ➢ Presentation in line with the revised Module 1 curricula ➢ Interactive exercise: top 3 entrepreneurial strengths & weaknesses
11:45 – 12:30	**SESSION 2 – PRESENTATION & PITCH TECHNIQUES** ➢ Presentation in line with the revised Module 7 curricula ➢ Interactive exercise: none (it's preparation for the final pitch)
12:30 – 13:30	LUNCH BREAK – Provided by a local business success story restaurant to underscore the theme of the workshop
13:30 – 15:30	**SESSION 3 – PRODUCT/SERVICE DEVELOPMENT** ➢ Presentation in line with the revised Module 2 curricula ➢ Interactive exercises: ➢ **DISCOVER:** user persona + problem tree/user journey (depending on the business idea, e.g., if a participant wants to address food waste in restaurants & supermarkets, a problem tree might work better, while if the goal is to change customer experience in a certain area, a user journey is more appropriate) ➢ **DESIGN:** brainstorming → categorization ➢ **DELIVER:** target board
15:30 – 16:00	Coffee break
16:00 – 18:00	**SESSION 4 – MARKETING & PROMOTION** ➢ Presentation in line with the revised Module 3 curricula ➢ Interactive exercises: user persona (revisited) + mini (1-pager) marketing plan + brand creation (name, logo, tagline)
18:00 – 19:00	**SESSION 5 – FINANCIAL PLANNING** ➢ Presentation in line with the revised Module 5 curricula ➢ Interactive exercises: list of necessary resources, relevant cost categories (and estimated costs), pricing
19:00	DINNER

11 Expected outputs of the core modules



Source: own editing

- **Saturday morning** is all about the **team presentations**, but **Module 4** is also included here – this section of the Business Model Canvas is the least important for the purposes of the expected outcome (i.e., results from here are rarely included in a pitch) but still crucial to learn about.

DAY 2	**November 8** (Saturday)
9:00 – 9:10	Welcome
9:10 – 10:40	**SESSION 5 – HUMAN RESOURCES** ➢ Presentation in line with the revised Module 4 curricula ➢ Interactive exercises: plenary Slido survey, job description & interview simulation
10:40 – 11:00	Coffee break – Preparing for the pitches
11:00 – 12:30	**TEAM PITCHES** Every team gets **5-7 minutes** to present their work in whatever format they want (i.e., using paper tools or digital means, appointing one representative or doing it as a group) – mainly their business idea and its viability. The partners decided to use the **audience as a jury** – every participant will need to evaluate the pitches (except their own) based on the same list of criteria. At the end, the team with the highest number of points receives a **small reward**.
12:30	LUNCH

2.2 Variations on a theme

This **business support programme** was put together **with testing in mind**, not including every feature, only the most important characteristics – similarly to a **minimum viable product**. Therefore, there are a lot of **possibilities for variation**.

The partners opted to organize a 2-day version, but the materials could work in **different timeframes** as well. As an event, the ideal duration would be over **3 days** (with accommodations for 2 nights in case of a cross-border or regional event), during which other programme elements might also be incorporated for added value *(see Figure 13)*. A **1-day event** could also work and involve a smaller budget *(see Figure 12)*. Foregoing the event-centric view, the modules can also be **presented over a longer time period**, including different exercises and "homework" between sessions.

12 Suggested agenda for a one-day training event

8:00 – 8:45	Welcome, icebreaker(s) ➢ Depending on the participants (i.e., whether they are there for "only" skills development or working on an actual business idea which they want to launch afterwards), this is also the time for forming groups. ➢ Some elements of Module 1 could be incorporated here, e.g., in the form of a short self-assessment questionnaire or a plenary survey. Using the exercise suggested in Chapter 1.2.1 as an icebreaker is also a good idea.
8:45 – 10:25	**SESSION 1 - PRODUCT/SERVICE DEVELOPMENT** ➢ Presentation in line with the revised Module 2 curricula ➢ Expected outcome of group/individual work: ➢ DISCOVER: summary of customer needs addressed ➢ DESIGN: detailed product/service design ➢ DELIVER: description of prototype-test process
10:25 – 10:40	Coffee break
10:40 – 12:30	**SESSION 2 – FINANCIAL PLANNING** ➢ Presentation in line with the revised Module 5 curricula ➢ Expected outcome of group/individual work: list of necessary resources, relevant cost categories (and estimated costs), pricing (a cash-flow table for the first year could also be used if the participants are planning to start a business soon)
12:30 – 13:30	LUNCH BREAK
13:30 – 15:30	**SESSION 3 – MARKETING & PROMOTION** ➢ Presentation in line with the revised Module 3 curricula ➢ Expected outcome of group/individual work: brand, user persona, one-pager marketing plan
15:30 – 15:45	Coffee break
15:45 – 17:45	**SESSION 4 – PRESENTATION & PITCH TECHNIQUES** ➢ Presentation in line with the revised Module 7 curricula ➢ Expected outcome of group/individual work: pitch
17:45 – 18:00	Technical break – preparing for the pitches
18:00 – 19:00	**PITCH PRESENTATIONS** If the participants are soon-to-be entrepreneurs, they might not want to share their ideas in this form with the whole group. In cases like that, Session 4 could be changed to include Module 4 (Human resources) instead, and then the event would be closed.
19:00	DINNER

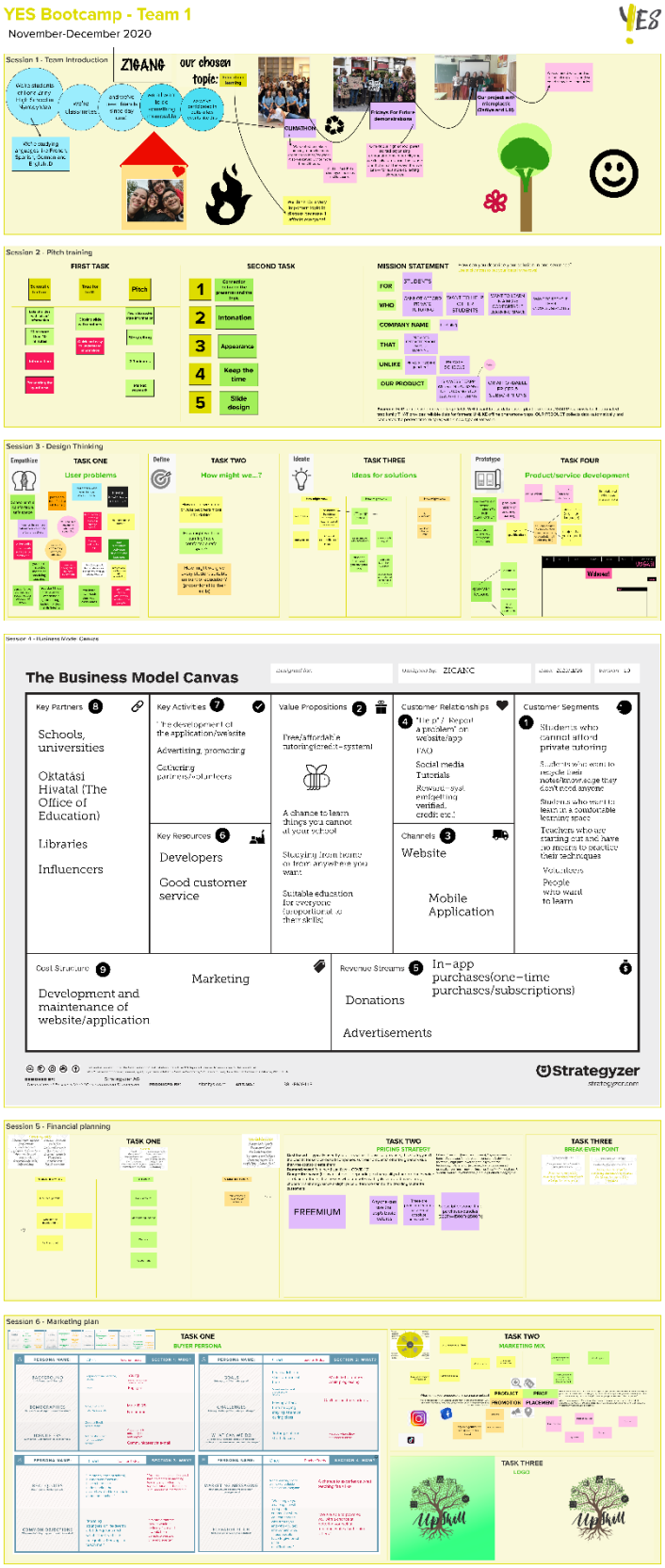
Source: own editing

13 Suggested agenda for a 3-day training event

DAY 1	
15:00 – 15:20	Welcome, introducing the programme
15:20 – 16:00	Icebreakers Before separating the participants into smaller groups, a round of introductions should be made – there are many exercises that support this purpose (e.g., completing sentences like *"We both like…"* in pairs).
16:00 – 16:40	Team-building activities After creating groups, it's good to start off teamwork with a fun exercise like Island Survival (i.e., the teams are given a scenario where a plane has crashed, leaving them stranded on a deserted island and they must agree on a list of 3-5 items that they would absolutely need).
16:40 – 17:00	Coffee break
17:00 – 18:00	**KEYNOTE SPEECH** Instead of using the entirety of the Module 1 curricula as an introduction to entrepreneurship, the organizers could invite a local entrepreneur to present key success factors, followed by a Q&A session.
18:00 – 18:30	Summary of the day – first impressions and expectations
18:30	DINNER (if included)
DAY 2	
9:00 – 9:45	**SESSION 1 – PRESENTATION & PITCH TECHNIQUES** ➢ Presentation in line with the revised Module 7 curricula ➢ Specific aim: setting expectations for the team pitches
9:45 – 12:30	**SESSION 2 - PRODUCT/SERVICE DEVELOPMENT** ➢ Presentation in line with the revised Module 2 curricula ➢ Expected outcome of group/individual work in line with the INSPIRE test training and/or the one-day version ➢ Should include a 15-20-minute coffee break
12:30 – 13:30	LUNCH
13:30 – 15:30	**SESSION 3 – FINANCIAL PLANNING** ➢ Presentation in line with the revised Module 5 curricula ➢ Expected outcome of group/individual work in line with the INSPIRE test training and/or the one-day version
15:30 – 15:45	Coffee break
15:45 – 18:00	**SESSION 4 – MARKETING & PROMOTION** ➢ Presentation in line with the revised Module 3 curricula ➢ Expected outcome of group/individual work in line with the INSPIRE test training and/or the one-day version
18:00 – 18:30	Summary of the day
18:30	DINNER (if included)
DAY 3	
9:00 – 9:45	Roundtable discussion with successful local entrepreneurs
9:45 – 10:30	**SESSION 5 – HUMAN RESOURCES** Presentation in line with the revised Module 4 curricula OR by an external speaker (e.g., HR director of a multinational company)
10:30 – 10:45	Coffee break
10:45 – 12:30	Preparing for the pitches Group work, supported by the facilitators
12:30 – 13:30	LUNCH
13:30 – 15:00	**PITCH PRESENTATIONS**
15:00 – 15:30	Closing the competition (and the event)

Source: own editing

The agendas above were made with the assumption that the event or training course will be organized offline, but **the materials can be easily adapted to online use** as well. Most virtual meeting platforms allow ways for grouping people together and separating them to "rooms" (e.g., breakout rooms in Zoom) for teamwork. As for the format of the outcomes (i.e., what format the results of the interactive exercises take), even the in-person meetings can utilize **digital means to document** them, but in the case of an online event, that's the only viable course of action. This partnership has experience in the use of **MURAL**, a free virtual collaboration platform – it was used in the YES project of ROVE when most of the planned events needed to be organized online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The picture on the right shows how the final result looked like after six online sessions over six weeks – every team had their own separate workboard and they had access to all of their previous work while going through the different activities one by one. Learning the basic use of these platforms (MURAL, Miro, etc.) is easy and intuitive, and it provides a **great way** to document the events but also **to follow the progress of the participants properly**.



Ending with a pitch is a given in most cases – it only makes sense to not include it if the participants are close to opening their company and wouldn't want to share the details in a plenary session where potential competitors might be present. If a pitch session is included, however, there are several ways it could go – the partners choose the least competitive option for the testing process where the timeline provides some pressure, but the **judges** are the **other teams**, not external experts. **Local entrepreneurs** could be invited to evaluate the pitches, making the event more high-profile. If the goal is to simulate real-life conditions – or the participants are actually looking for investors to launch their company –, the panel of judges can actually be **representatives of organizations with a mandate and sufficient funding for supporting promising entrepreneurs**.

The **format** of the pitch can also be changed to make the event/training different. The partners elected to keep it simple for the testing phase and only specified the **minimum and maximum amount of time** a team/individual can talk (5-7 minutes), but there are other options:

- **PechaKucha** is a presentation format where speakers show **20 slides**, with **each slide displayed for only 20 seconds**, resulting in a total presentation time of **6 minutes and 40 seconds**. It's a good way to emphasize story-telling instead of using a lot of texts, turning presentations into a more concise and engaging experience for the listeners – the duration is also perfect for the purposes of a business pitch.

14 Presentation during the Polar Bear Pitching competition in Oulu, Finland



Source: Polar Bear Pitching website

- An extreme example of a pitching contest is the **Polar Bear Pitching competition in Oulu, Finland**, where the aspiring entrepreneurs pitch their startups while standing waist-deep in an ice hole – they can talk until they are in the water, so the only time limit is their physical endurance. The event provides **memorable exposure** for the companies that are present, providing high visibility through media coverage. The method also **blends** Finnish **tradition** (i.e., ice swimming) **with** startup **innovation**. It's clear that this method is very specific and dependent on the culture of the given country, but **similar bold choices can make any event more interesting and encourage the participants to be more creative** – e.g., the presenters could be blindfolded so they can't use visual support (i.e., slides).

In the case of a longer event or a course taking place over several weeks, there are a lot of options to include **corresponding activities** that make the experience for the participants even richer and provide additional knowledge and motivation – the suggested agenda for the 3-day event even includes some of them to demonstrate.

- Between training sessions, a separate event could be organized to have a **roundtable discussion with successful local entrepreneurs**: inviting 3 or 4 of them from diverse industries (tech, retail, hospitality, etc.), selecting a core theme (in this case, it could be "early challenges" or just simply "the road to success"), preparing relevant questions, and providing the participants with the opportunity to ask their own at the end. Offering some networking time afterwards (e.g., over a coffee or lunch) is optional but highly recommended. This activity is useful for the participants since they can:
  - Hear **firsthand stories** about starting up a company, making mistakes and learning lessons in the process;
  - See relatable stories that **build their confidence** and help them visualize their own path;
  - Feel that they are a part of a **community** already where sharing knowledge and experience is the norm;
  - Get **feedback from experts** to validate their business idea; and
  - Explore opportunities for **future internships or** even **mentorships** with the speakers.
- Organizing a **study visit to** different **local companies** is also a good idea. Some vocational trainings in public education already have a system where they take the students to field trips to places where they could work later, but in this case, the focus should not be on showcasing the company as a future job opportunity (although it might be a side effect). The goal is to **show the participants in real life how a company works**. Variety is key: a visit to a multinational company could be very interesting and there's generally a lot that can be learned from them due

to their vast experience and complex operations, but **selecting smaller businesses is** even **better because it's closer to what a new entrepreneur might realistically be in a few years**. Once again, there could be a central theme (e.g., marketing) – it's especially useful to focus a visit if it's to a larger company –, but gaining a comprehensive understanding of the given business is also an option, especially if it's small.

- Inviting an **external speaker to reinforce the learnings** from one of the topics could also have merit. For example, a session about HR might start with a presentation based on Module 4, followed by a keynote speaker leading the HR department of a company, and then closing with practical exercises.
- There are several sections where the **practical exercise** could be changed to take place **in more real-life conditions**. For example, when the participants explore the problem or create a prototype during design thinking (Module 2), it's a good idea to **send them out to the streets and ask them to make short interviews with people about what they are working on** (e.g., would they use a product/service like that and under what conditions). The user persona exercise can also be modified to be based on a real person who is interviewed.

Depending on the event type and the invited participants, the groups or individuals might already have a solid business idea they would like to work with, but if a vocational school, university, or employment agency is interested to provide a training to people who don't have specific plans, a good way to bring them closer to reality is to **set up challenges at the beginning, brought** to them **by real companies**. Their task in this case would be to find a solution to the presented problem (after exploring it in detail) and then introduce the solution to the judges who are the owners of the original challenges. As a less realistic but maybe more entertaining version, **imaginary scenarios** can also come into play: the groups can be presented with an alternative universe after a zombie apocalypse and tasked with the job of creating a company that addresses a challenge related to the new world order they were introduced to (e.g., zombie-proof housing). Setups like this **boost creativity** and although the specifics can't be used for a real business, the method is quite **sufficient to reinforce the learnings of the modules**.

These are just a few examples of the different ways of using the provided curriculum – **the deciding factor is always the target group and what their needs are**.

2.3 Summary of test results

The training material was **tested through two 2-day workshops on 20-20 participants aged between 18 and 30** – one event in **Nyíregyháza** on **November 7-8, 2025**, and another in **Oradea** on **February 6-7, 2026**.

After both trainings, a **feedback form** was sent out to the participants to support the evaluation process – **50%** of them **completed it** (10 from the first and 11 from the second event).

- They had to **evaluate the individual sections of the programme on a 1-to-6 scale** (with 1 meaning weak and 6 meaning exceptional) and **the average value ranged from 5 to 5.9** – the highest score was given to the module about presentation techniques which the participants have found particularly useful.
- The second part of the review included **statements** about the slides and the presenters themselves and there were **four possible answers**: *Completely agree*, *Mostly agree*, *Mostly disagree*, *Completely disagree*. **89.61%** of the respondents selected ***"Completely agree"***, and **97.62%** either that or the ***"Mostly agree"*** option.

This **overwhelmingly positive response** means that **no major changes are necessary** in the curriculum. However, some of the long-form answers included a few suggestions that should be kept in mind when organizing a similar event.

- The modules contain a lot of information for a short amount of time – **highlighting the most important things in every presentation during the lectures** is key to ensure that the participants can remember the key points despite their fatigue.
- The aforementioned fatigue can be offset by **slightly longer breaks** (e.g., most of the suggested agendas have 15-minute coffee breaks and 1-hour lunch breaks which could be 30-minute and 1.5-hour instead).

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