

PROJECT REPORT

A project report by
Antonia Grassl, Amber Lups, Frédérique Hoogland,
Helena Comella, Jule Günther, Malik Rast

December 15th, 2021



Table of Contents

<i>Introduction</i>	1
<i>Project details</i>	1
<i>Achievements and Failures</i>	2
<i>Lessons learned</i>	3

Introduction

We are team BEco, a student group from Windesheim Honours College. Our study program focuses on sustainable challenges that appear in the globalized world, including issues like the use of fossil fuels. For this reason, our program collaborated with Windesheim Lectoraat Energietransitie to take on a project with our team, which is part of a larger project resulting from a collaboration with ERNON. This document's purpose is to reflect on the journey of the project, the problems we faced and the lessons we learned from it. This document might be a helpful start for future student research groups that will cooperate with both Windesheim Lectoraat Energietransitie and ERNON.

Project details

Project description

Our client, Jeike Wallinga, is part of the research group Energy Transition in Windesheim. She invited our team to be part of a project with ERNON in which they develop strategies for the energy transition in business parks. Such complex transitions encounter obstacles along the way. Therefore, our project purpose was to create an understanding of the obstacles business parks face during the process of the energy transition.

Research topic

The energy transition can happen in multiple ways. One option is the installation of solar panels to make use of solar power. A convenient location to install these panels is on rooftops (so-called rooftop-solar) since they mostly do not have another usage and provide a lot of space. Many businesses in business parks have roofs that could be used to install solar panels and thereby contribute to the transition to renewable energies. However, many hesitates to install them. According to the data collected by ERNON and supported by research, one common reason is that the insurance companies won't cover it. Therefore, we focused our research on insurance companies and the obstacles they face to cover for solar panels.

Deliverables

There are two project deliverables. The first one consists of a Research Report, which includes the findings of the research conducted and an advisory for future research. The second deliverable is this Project Report, which reflects on the journey of this project by reflecting on the achievements, failures and lessons learned.

Timeline

The head start of the project was on the 14th of September when the first client meeting with Jeike Wallinga took place and ends with this report and the final end-of-project meeting on the 15th of December. The first meeting with ERNON (Oene Venema and Wietse Venema) took place on the 1st of October. The scope of the project was only defined on the 26th of October, which led to a delayed start of the research.

Overview of phases

1. Understanding the project environment
2. Finding a project focus
3. Setting up a strategy for research
4. Collecting data
5. Results and evaluation

Achievements and Failures

As the nature of the project was challenging, the journey had ups and downs. In this section, we will share our view on the achievements and failures from the past months.

Table 1

Achievements and failures of the project

Achievements	Failures
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Persistence to find a research topic that is of value to the stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Time management
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Stakeholder Management and Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Contacting possible interviewees
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Meeting management	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Clear weekly tasks
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Adaptation to change	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Coordination within the group
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Finding alternatives, such as using our network to find interviewees	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Conduct the research	

Although it was challenging to find a project focus in the starting phase of the project, we persistently searched for a research topic that was of value to the stakeholders. The changes in project focus showed great flexibility for adaptation to change. Finding a focus at a late stage led to poor time management of the project since only one month and a half was left to do the research. Moreover, under this time pressure, we should have started contacting possible interviewees earlier, since receiving answers and setting up the interviews takes a lot of time. Searching for possible interviewees was also a challenge, and with many an interview wasn't possible. However, we managed to find an alternative and use our personal network to find interviewees, which in the end was successful. Since we are a team formed by international students, contacting our network also broadened the research perspectives.

Overall, throughout the project, we managed our stakeholders closely. We found the most effective communication adapted to the stakeholder preferences. For example, with Jeike we communicated through email and had meetings both offline and online depending on time constraints and meeting purposes. With Oene and Wietse, we communicated via What's app, as this was more suitable and efficient for them, and had mostly offline meetings to discuss the project plan and online meetings for

project updates. We also had effective and successful meeting management. We came prepared for each meeting, we followed an agenda to cover all necessary topics and considered everyone's opinion. We were not as successful with our team management. Even though we had team roles, we failed in clearly defining weekly tasks and meetings, which created difficulties with coordinating within the group.

Lessons learned

The project was a learning journey for all parties. ERNON did not have experience in working with students before, but close collaboration was required for the achievement of the project. Additionally, for most of the team members, it was their first research project. In this section, we are going to evaluate the challenges which occurred in each of the above-mentioned phases (project details) and the lessons we have learned from them.

Table 2

Lessons learned during 5 phases

Phase	LESSONS LEARNED
1. Understanding the project environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A clear understanding of the division of roles and responsibilities of stakeholders
2. Finding a project focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Setting expectations and project definition - Clients and team members should define a topic where value for the client can still be added and consequently, the research focus can be put there - Get all the existing information on the table before deciding on a research topic and start researching
3. Setting up a strategy for research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A team with 6 people is difficult to coordinate, clear structure and task division are necessary - Clear project plan with the different steps to take - Make a project timeline
4. Collecting data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Desk research was not the best method for our project since not many academic articles on the topic are available - Some parties (e.g. Municipalities/government) are difficult to get in contact with - Important to reach out to possible interview partners early in the process - Making use of personal networks of ourselves and clients
5. Results and evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Deliverable can change or be adjusted during the project - An end of the project report helps reflect on the project and help future collaborations.

A detailed explanation of the lessons learned:

1. At the beginning of the project for a rather long time, it was unclear to the team how the division of power and roles was between Jeike Wallinga and ERNON. We did not know if we should update and meet with Jeike, Wietse and Oene equally and with whom to decide on a topic and strategy. If we would have settled that in the very beginning the actual research could probably have started earlier.
2. The next obstacle was figuring out a project focus. This phase was the most challenging in our project. When we started the project, there was a lack of set expectations and project definition, which created uncertainties and misunderstandings. Given the broadness of the project topic, time was spent on desk research that was not relevant. After different proposals and understandings of the project, we narrowed it down and found a way to contribute something of value for our client. This was possible because we went through the data collected by ERNON with Wietse, which allowed us to know which information they already had. From this meeting, we identified the topic of insurances, which had not been yet researched by the company and was of value to them. Therefore, we learned that getting all the existing data from the main stakeholders in the table at an early stage is important.
3. The experience to work with a team of six members was for most of us a new and challenging, as we were used to working with fewer teammates. Even though we had team roles, we failed in clearly defining weekly tasks and meetings, which created difficulties with coordinating within the group. To achieve our project goals, we could have set up a clear plan with a timeline, especially because the timeframe of the project was limited.
4. To gather information, we reached out to different parties. We figured that it can be difficult to get in contact with some parties, especially the municipalities/government. To make sure the contact will be successful a certain amount of time is necessary to plan in since mail and telephone traffic can be quiet time costly. Furthermore, we started using our social network too late in the process. Even though we had some useful contacts, we were not able to conduct all the interviews we would have liked to do, due to the time limitation. We learned that it is helpful to browse through your network from the very beginning and also ask other people for useful contacts. As it turned out later, our clients did have people in their network which could have been useful for us.
5. The original deliverable was a research report in which we would explain the results of our desk- and field research. Although we also deliver the agreed-on report, another document gained more importance during the project. As we were facing the challenge of being the first student team working with Jeike and ERNON, the lessons learned and what to change for future collaborations became important. Therefore, our deliverable got expanded and next to the research report we will also deliver this project report.