

**JA EUROPE
COMPANY OF THE YEAR
COMPETITION GUIDEBOOK 2021**

Company of the Year Competition 2021

General Information

The JA Europe Company of the Year Competition brings together the best student JA mini-companies from all across Europe that participated in the Company Programme during the current academic year.

Since its launch in 1919, the JA Company Programme offers students aged 15-18 the opportunity to learn how to move a business idea from concept to reality and to discover first-hand how business works. Over the course of a school year, students develop a product or a service, create their own company and manage their business from start to finish.

The JA Europe Company of the Year Competition is not simply a business competition for young people. We attempt to balance the business achievements of each team as a whole with their members' individual personal development. It is therefore not sufficient for a team to only run a financially successful mini-company or to have created an exciting product or service in order to win the award. Mini-company members must also demonstrate that they understand how and why the mini-company performed as it did and understand the differences and similarities between their mini-companies and the real companies on their markets.

In this guidebook, you will find all the relevant information about the competition (requirements, criteria and guidelines). All participants should read this information carefully and consult any need for additional details with their JA Member organisation.

Age of Participants

Achievers representing their companies in the competition must be at least 15 years old and no more than 21 years old on the date of the competition.

Team Requirements

Any member of JA Europe may send a team. A mini-company should not participate in the competition more than once.

The number of official participants per JA mini-company is limited to min. 3 and max. 5 students. A student may NOT attend as an official participant if he/she has participated as a member of a team in any of the past competitions.

If additional achievers from the same mini-company attend the event, they may NOT participate in any part of the competition (during the interview with the Main jury nor the interview with any of the signature juries).

Language

The official language of the competition is English. Teams who are not fluent in English are allowed to make use of an interpreter and/or a dictionary. The competition is not designed to be a test of English. A good command of conversational English does not necessarily mean that team members are able to understand and convey quite complex business concepts in English.

However, a certain minimum level of English is expected. It does not have to be perfect but shall allow for normal/basic communication including a basic command of business terminology (such as revenues, costs and margin; and ability to explain the difference between them) during the interviews with the juries.

Stages of the Competition

The on-site Competition takes place during 3 consecutive working days and includes the following stages:

Main Stages:

- Submission of written **Company Report** (prior to the onsite part of the competition)
- **30-sec Company Commercial Video** (prior to the onsite part of the competition)
- **Elevator Pitch & Panel Interview with the Main Jury** (during the onsite part of the competition)

Additional Stages:

- **Interview(s) with the Signature juries** (during the onsite part of the competition – only top 5 teams selected by each Signature jury will be interviewed)
- **Virtual Stands Exhibition** as part of the Opening of the event on June 29 with special award TBC. Technical requirements will be announced by the end of May.

Each stage is assessed by the jury. A specific set of criteria has been developed to assess the companies at all stages. The detailed description of the criteria is part of this guidebook.

There is no winning formula. Each JA mini-company is different and should use its judgment to decide how to best convey to the judges its members' strengths and experience and present appropriate elements of their unique story throughout the competition.

Awards

Main Awards:

- **Company of the Year Award**
- **2nd Place**
- **3rd Place**

Signature Awards

Each Signature Award is deliberated on by a special Signature Award jury. Interviews with the Signature juries provide an opportunity to find the best company according to the stipulated criteria for the particular Signature Award.

Based on the evaluation of the Company Report and the Company commercial video, each Signature jury will select 5 teams they want to interview.

European Signature Awards:

- **FedEx (TBC)**
- **ManpowerGroup**
- **Citi Foundation**
- **BNY Mellon**

National Signature Awards:

- **SEB**
- **Moody's**
- **Municipality of Vilnius**

Special Awards:

- **Alumni Leadership Award** - the award is given to outstanding individual students demonstrating extra initiative and extraordinary leadership during the program.
- **Public Choice Award** – recognises the mini-company commercial that gathered the most votes from the public, for best promoting their service or product through the 30-second mini-company commercial video.

All the results will be announced during the Awards Ceremony on July 15th.

Competition Criteria

The competition criteria require the students to demonstrate or explain their achievements in learning and their individual and group development while running a mini-company.

- **Innovation, Value Creation and Entrepreneurship**
- **Product/Service Development and Customer Focus**
- **Financial Performance**
- **Objective Setting, Planning/Review, and Company Administration**
- **Ability to Demonstrate Achievements in Learning**

Based on these criteria, the judges will be looking for innovative approaches to tackling the challenges of running a company as well as for understanding of the value that the product/service brings to the market. They will also assess the impact of the 'learning by doing' experience. In scoring each criterion, judges will assess how well the mini-company performed against it and to what extent mini-company members have shown that they understand their performance and the business principles involved.

There is no winning formula. Each mini-company is different and must use its own judgement to decide how best to convey the strengths of its members' experience and how to present the success of the mini-company to the judges by telling appropriate elements of their unique story through the competition stages.

At each stage of the competition, the judges make an assessment of the performance of the mini-company against the criteria as revealed at that stage and score the mini-company performance. The scores will be amended (could be up or down) at each stage as the judges learn more about the mini-company.

***IMPORTANT:** Given the exceptional circumstances lived during this school year due to the COVID-19 crisis, judges will also consider how the teams analysed the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on their business and acted accordingly.*

Each criterion is given equal weighting. The details of all criteria are presented below.

Innovation, Value Creation and Entrepreneurship

This criterion (weighting 20%) is expected to answer the questions below (but not limited to):

1. Is the mini-company innovative in any way (the product itself, the process of development, the business model, the marketing strategies, etc.)?
2. Can the team members explain the need addressed and the value their mini-company created?
3. Did the mini-company encourage the practice of continuous improvement and innovation (e.g. asking for suggestions and recommendations to add value to the operations of the mini-company)?

4. Did the mini-company take an approach to social, ethical and environmental issues?
5. *Did the mini-company apply innovative solutions to the problems that arise from the COVID-19 crisis at any stage?*

Product/Service Development and Customer Focus

This criterion (weighting 20%) is expected to answer the questions below (but not limited to):

1. Can the team members describe the way they evaluated the idea and transformed it into a business opportunity?
2. Did the mini-company carry out market research, understand the results and respond appropriately? (e.g. product design, marketing and sales techniques, etc.)
3. Did the mini-company react appropriately to the costumers' reaction to their product/service?
4. Do the team members understand why their product/service was a success?
5. *Did the mini-company analyse changes in the market and adapt their services at any stage (e.g. adapted product, new sales channel, new sources of funding)?*

Financial Performance

This criterion (weighting 20%) is expected to answer the questions below (but not limited to):

1. Do the team members understand factors that can affect the price and the link between costs and price?
2. Do the team members understand the financial performance of their mini-company as well as concepts such as cash flow, profit and loss, balance sheet etc.?
3. Did the mini-company have a good financial control in place?
4. Has the mini-company paid a wage/salary to its staff or have they worked pro-bono to make the reported profit?

Did the mini-company analyse the financial impact of the COVID-19 crisis on its performance (developed scenarios)?

Objective Setting, Planning/Review, and Company Administration

This criterion (weighting 20%) is expected to answer the questions below (but not limited to):

1. Did the mini-company have a clear business plan? Were objectives reviewed and updated regularly?
2. Did mini-company members assess the effectiveness of their solutions to problems that occurred during the operations of the mini-company?
3. Was the mini-company properly structured and how was the structure changed in response to difficulties encountered?
4. Did the mini-company have an effective system to manage and record its activities?
5. *Did the mini-company analyse the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on its operations and acted appropriately?*

Ability to Demonstrate Achievements in Learning

This criterion (weighting 20%) serves to evaluate the achievements in learning and the individual and group development that took place while running a mini-company.

Are the team members able to explain how the Company Programme allowed them to develop entrepreneurial competences?

- Creativity
- Self-confidence
- Taking initiative
- Teamwork
- Resourcefulness
- Perseverance
- Taking responsibility

The jury will also analyse to what extent the team was effective in conveying the message at each stage of the competition (see below the questions the assessment should answer in each stage).

Company Report

1. Does the Company Report provide relevant information and make the reader comfortable finding and reading that information?
2. Does the Company Report contain a strong executive summary that provides the essential information related to the performance of the mini-company?
3. Does the Company Report present the financial statements in the required structure and supported by an effective analysis of financials? Are the financial statements

correct or do they contain mistakes that would suggest gaps in understanding of financial statements or business finances?

4. Does the Company Report show that the team understands the overall business performance, profitability, and the future potential of the mini-company?

30-sec Company Commercial Video

1. Was the video commercial effective in conveying a message?
2. Is the video commercial appealing and consistent with the idea and target group?

Elevator Pitch & Panel Interview

1. Did the team summarise the key experiences and achievements of the mini-company? Did the team succeed in telling their unique story in a way that was interesting for the target group?
2. Were the team members able to satisfactorily answer all questions the judges asked?
3. Were the team members also able to communicate their opinion instead of only providing answers to the questions?
4. Did the answers show the understanding of how and why the mini-company performed as it did and what general lessons they were able to draw from this, and how these lessons might be applied in a new business context?
5. Did the team show good team spirit and support to each other at the interview?

Signature and Special Award Criteria

Criteria of individual Signature and Special Awards will be published on the official website of the competition by 30.4.2021

Guidelines for Participants

The following guidelines provide guidance to the teams on how to best prepare for and deliver their part in each stage of the competition. These guidelines also aim at explaining to the teams what the mandatory parts of each stage are as well as specific rules for presenting. However, the guidelines do not tell the teams which aspects of their mini-company to present. It is up to the teams to choose the appropriate facts and convince the judges that they have met the judging criteria.

Company Report

The Company Report is to summarise the team's year in business. It is an important record of what they achieved. The report is a mixture of a standard annual report (presenting processes, performance, results, and future potential of the mini-company to a business partner) with reflective writing addressing issues of personal as well as team learning (presenting the learning outcomes of their participation in the Company Programme).

The report is also to demonstrate the skills in creating a printed document that gets the reader excited about the mini-company and its business.

Executive Summary

The executive summary should not exceed one page and should provide the essential information about the performance of the mini-company. The executive summary is the most important part of a business document. It is the first (and sometimes the only) thing others will read and the last thing you should write. It is simply a brief summary of the document, so that busy people who will read your document know at a glance how much to read and what actions will probably be needed. It should tell the reader why your business is special. It is usually the first page of the body of a company report.

There are many online resources about how to write an effective executive summary – search/find/use them. (To receive the highest possible score, it must be clear, exciting and effective as a stand-alone overview of the plan)

Analysis of Overall Business Performance and Profitability

Should not exceed one page. Presents the profitability of the mini-company – where the profits came from and why (gross and net margin, fixed versus variable costs). Explains the determinants of the profitability, how scalable the business is and how revenues, costs and profit would change with an expansion. You can choose where you want to place this section within the Company Report. Just bear in mind that the reader should be able to easily find that information in the report.

Analysis of Financials

Presented in summary form that makes it easy to read and understand. Recommended length is one page. Consistent with the overall information in the Company Report and effective in capturing financial performance; provides an analysis of financials as well as the information about (a) liquidation and proposed allocation of earnings, (b) required funds and utilisation of funds, (c) share-holder capital, (d) financial assumptions, and (e) comparison

with the initial financial forecasts. You can choose where you want to place this section within the Company Report. Just bear in mind that the reader should be able to easily find that information in the report.

Profit and Loss Account		Balance Sheet	
A	Sales	Current Assets:	
B	Purchases	Stock	
C	Production Wages	Debtors	
D	Closing Stock	Cash at Bank	
E	Cost of Sales (B + C - D)	Cash in Hand	
	(A - E)	(A) TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	
	Gross Profit	Less:	
		Current Liabilities:	
F	Salaries, commissions and Bonuses	Bank Overdraft	
G	Stationery	Loans	
H	Rent & Hire	Creditors	
I	Miscellaneous Expenditure	Corporation Tax Payable	
J	Registration Fee	VAT Due	
	Total Expenses (F + G + H + I + J)	(B) TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES	
K	Gross Profit Less Total Expenses	(C) BALANCE (A - B)	
	Operating Profit (or Loss)	Represented by:	
L	Miscellaneous Income	(D) Issued Share Capital:	
M	Net Profit (or Loss) (K + L)	shares at €	
N	Corporation Tax Payable	(E) Profit & Loss Account (Profit after Tax)	
O	Profit after Tax (M - N)	(F) Shareholders' Funds (D + E)	
P	Appropriations of Profit (Q + R + S):		
Q	Dividends:		
R	Donations:		
S	Other:		
	Balance (should be nil) (O - P)		

Income Statement/Profit and Loss Account and Balance Sheet will be presented in the structure as outlined above. Additional line items are allowed if needed to create a true picture of the finances of the company. The statements may be presented monthly, quarterly or as an annual summary (recommended) and should include footnotes.

Overall Presentation

The report is expected to provide information and make the reader comfortable finding and reading it. In addition to the above, the mini-company may consider the structure as presented below.

- Company Overview** - Business purpose, history, genesis of concept, current status, overall strategy and objectives. To what problem are they providing a solution?
- Products or Services** - Description of products or services. Features and benefits of the products or services. Pricing strategy and current stage of development. Proprietary or not and perhaps an innovative approach.
- Operations** - Plan for production/delivery of product or services, product cost, margins, operation complexity, resources required.
- Market and Marketing Strategy** - Description of the market, competitive analysis, needs identification and marketing strategy, market acceptance and market opportunities, unique capabilities.
- Sales/Promotion** - Promotion and marketing activities of the company, sales strategy, sales objectives, training and current sales.
- Management** - Organisational structure and communication structure/activities. The

ability of the team (management understanding) to execute strategy according to the learning demonstrated by the team in accordance to experienced difficulties and positive reinforcements during the company performance. Use of business advisor and link-teacher.

g) **Future Potential of the Mini-company** - Future potential of the mini-company, or investment potential. Does the mini-company present ideas about the future? Even though the Company Programme runs only for a year and the mini- company is liquidated afterwards, the assumptions the members of the mini-company do about the future is of vital importance. How would they go about continuing the mini-company to make it a sustainable business? Do the owners understand how their business model works and on what skills and strengths it is built? What is the sustainable competitive advantage of the business? Next steps – are they realistic according to their business mission.

Technical requirements for submission:

- A copy of the report must be submitted to the host country through the national JA office at least four weeks before the competition.
- **Submission deadline: June 22**
 - *Important: Extended deadline for submission: June 28 for national organisations where the national finals will take place later than 10.6. 2021*
- Language – the report must be submitted in English language.
- Maximum 10 pages of A4. No appendices are allowed. The 10 pages exclude the front and back cover pages. Minimum font size to be used is 12.
- The front cover page (not counted in the permitted 10 pages) should include:
 - Name of the mini-company
 - Year of Operation
 - Name of Adviser(s) and Link Teacher(s)
 - Country
- The report must include the Final Accounts of the mini-company (i.e. Profit and Loss Statement and Balance Sheet, prepared as of the mini-company liquidation date) in the structure presented above in this document.
- The report should be submitted in PDF format. The size of the file is limited to 5 MB max.

Company Commercial Video

The 30-second commercial is a branded recorded video that aims at promoting the student company and their product/service. The commercial shall grab the attention, garner interest, and get people excited about what the student company does.

Effective video commercials are created in such a way that the audience remembers not only the ad, but also the brand and the message behind the ad. Your video commercial should spark a connection with your brand and your audience. Below some tips to consider when creating the video commercial:

1. **Represent Your Brand Clearly:** Using both verbal and visual cues, the name of your brand, logo and perhaps even the product itself should be conveyed throughout the commercial. Don't be secretive and wait until the end of the ad to show your brand's face. But be tasteful about it.
2. **Create a Storyline:** The best commercials don't just sell a product or service; they tell a story. Whether it is a heartfelt story, or a dose of humour or satire, create a storyline to which your audience can relate and connect.
3. **Keep it simple:** You only have 30 seconds to get your message across and form a connection with your audience. Keep the overall concept and storyline of your commercial simple.
4. **Include a call to action:** People viewing your company's commercial must be told what to do next – visit your store, call for a free quote, or check out your website. They need to be directed so that you can land more leads and convert more people into customers.

The commercial will be made public on the JA Europe Company of the Year website and social media channels. The video commercial will be evaluated by the Main Jury and different Signature juries but also by the public through online voting. The Public Choice Award will be given to the mini-company whose commercial gets the most public votes. The award prize will consist of mentoring for the team members.

Resources

- [How to create a great video commercial](#)

Technical requirements for submission

- The video must be in English
- Maximum length of 30 seconds
- The video must be uploaded on Youtube.com as a public video
- **Submission deadline: June 22**
 - *Important: Extended deadline for submission: June 28 for national organizations where the national finals will take place later than 10.6. 2021*

Elevator Pitch & Panel Interview

Each Mini-company will have an interview with its panel of main judges starting with 2-min elevator pitch.

The Elevator Pitch allows to demonstrate the ability to present the priority items of the business. It's also a way to give ideas for discussion and to solicit feedback from the judges on the progress and potential of the idea.

A good elevator pitch should be short and concise including all key information about the company but it should also be engaging demonstrative of the team's skills and knowledge.

Critical factors of a powerful elevator pitch are the following:

- An elevator pitch is simply a quick introduction to your business
- Short and concise
- Sparks interest and response
- It's clear
- It's authoritative
- It is about them, not you
- Highlights your value, and what problem you are solving
- Introduces your uniqueness
- It's relatable

Students may bring their product or other material they need to make an effective presentation of their company.

During **the Panel interview** the topics may range from points of clarification arising out of previous stages (Company Report and Company Commercial Video) to more searching questions on the wider application of the understanding achieved through running their mini-company. The interview is an opportunity to get more information about and revise the impression judges get of the team during previous stages. The interview is also an opportunity to motivate the students by giving them positive feedback on their achievements.

The **Panel Interview** allows the students to demonstrate the qualities of each individual and of the team as well as the scope of qualities that have been acquired by participating in the Company Programme. It is also an opportunity to demonstrate the team's ability to explain how they worked and solved problems, how they worked as a team, and how they searched for innovative solutions.

The team may consider to show their ability to

- Explain or demonstrate how the knowledge and understanding of how business functions helped the team run a successful mini-company; what issues have been important for the mini-company in its progress; why some things have gone well and others not; what abilities, competences, and skills the team members acquired and how they can use them (or have used them) in new situations;
- Demonstrate how the knowledge and understanding of business and the lessons learned can be (or have been) applied in a real business context as well as in new situations;
- Show the ability to explain or demonstrate how the team members have learned, personally and as a team, from the Company Programme experience.

Technical Details:

- Timing: Max. 2 minutes' elevator pitch + max. 10 minutes' interview with the judges (or max. 15 minutes for teams using interpreters). Interviews are happening without advisors or link-teachers).
- The interview will be done on an on-line video conferencing platform, students and jury members do not need to gather in person. Each member of the team and the jury members will be given a login for the session – the interviews will be private – only students and judges. A JA Europe team member will facilitate each interview session
- Test calls with all the teams will be organised before the day of the official interview (schedule to be announced in advance)
- The interviews will be held on July 12-13 (schedule to be announced on July 7)

Signature Awards Jury Interviews

Each Signature Award is deliberated on by a special Signature Award jury. Interviews with the Signature juries provide an opportunity to find the best company according to the stipulated criteria for the particular signature award.

Based on the evaluation of the Company Report and the Company Commercial Video, each Signature jury will select 5 teams they want to interview

Criteria of individual Signature and Special Awards will be published on the official website of the competition by 30.4.2021

Technical Details:

- Top 5 mini-companies selected by each Signature jury will be interviewed
- Mini-company members without their advisor or link-teacher will be questioned by the particular signature jury for a maximum of 8 minutes (or max. 12 minutes in the case of teams using interpreters).
- The interview will be done on an on-line video conferencing platform, students and jury members do not need to gather as a group. Each member of the team and the jury members will be given a login for the session – the interviews will be private – only students and judges. A JA Europe team member will facilitate each interview session
- Test calls with all the teams will be organised before the day of the official interview (schedule to be announced in advance)
- The interviews will be held on July 8 - 13 (schedule to be announced on July 7)