

BELGIAN  
BEST PRACTICE

# Business Growth & Integration

ECOALIST: analysing how and why firms grow through real-world cases and SWOT thinking

ECONOMICS

AGE 14-15

Rocío Jordán Padilla • EEB2 • Belgium • 120 min



## AI-enhanced cooperative learning

From case studies → integration decisions → SWOT → client-ready briefing



AI Navigators: Empowering Teachers for the AI Era

Project ID: 2024-1-MK01-KA220-SCH-000253777

# Why this is a best practice

AI supports the design. Learning remains social, analytical and student-led.

## Authentic economics

Students analyse growth decisions involving recognisable firms, connecting economic concepts to situations they can understand and debate.

## Structured collaboration

The activity deliberately moves from pairs to groups of four, with each student becoming a SWOT “specialist” responsible for one perspective.

## Purposeful AI use

ChatGPT helped the teacher design rich scenarios, guided questions and differentiation — not replace student thinking or discussion.

**Best-practice signal: AI expands the quality of the learning design while students do the reasoning, collaboration and judgement.**

# How do firms grow, and what does that growth mean?

Students move beyond definitions to evaluate real growth decisions.

### CORE ECONOMIC KNOWLEDGE

- Internal vs external growth
- Vertical • horizontal • lateral • conglomerate integration
- Why firms choose to grow
- Internal & external economies of scale

### THE HIGHER-ORDER TASK

**Use SWOT analysis to examine different firm-growth case studies.**

Students must identify the growth method, explain the rationale, and weigh benefits against possible consequences.



# Start with faces students may recognise

A simple non-AI warm-up activates prior knowledge before introducing the economics.

**4-5 MINUTES**

**“Who is this CEO — and which business do you connect them with?”**

The teacher showed pictures of different CEOs and invited students to link each person with their business.

→ A quick bridge from familiar companies to the question: how did these firms become larger?



# A deliberately social learning journey

Students progressively build understanding, responsibility and confidence.



**Guided questions support students throughout the process.**

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# ChatGPT as a learning-design partner

The teacher used AI to create and structure the activity, scenarios and scaffolding.

## 1 Scenario design

Generate detailed scenarios involving well-recognised firms that have grown in different ways.

## 2 Activity architecture

Shape an interactive progression from pair analysis to four-person groups and final presentation.

## 3 Differentiation

Provide guided questions and scaffolding appropriate for 14-year-olds in their first year of Economics.

*Prompt intent: “Create different scenarios with well-recognised firms... identify the type of growth, reasons/benefits and possible consequences... boost cooperation, creativity and motivation.”*

# ECOALIST: students become growth consultants

The activity gives the economics a professional purpose and a clear audience.

## ECOALIST

A fictional company that analyses the SWOT of a firm's decision to become larger.

ROLE: ECONOMIC ADVISERS

- |           |                              |                                           |
|-----------|------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| <b>01</b> | <b>Understand the firm</b>   | What happened?                            |
| <b>02</b> | <b>Classify growth</b>       | Internal / external + integration type    |
| <b>03</b> | <b>Evaluate the decision</b> | Why grow? What benefits and consequences? |
| <b>04</b> | <b>Brief the “client”</b>    | Present a balanced recommendation         |

# Every student owns one part of the SWOT

Specialisation creates individual accountability inside group work.



## STRENGTHS

What advantages does the growth decision create?



## WEAKNESSES

What internal difficulties or costs might appear?



## OPPORTUNITIES

What new possibilities could growth unlock?



## THREATS

What external risks or negative consequences matter?

**Then specialists share → the whole group understands all four perspectives → peers give feedback after presentations.**

# Assessment is embedded in the task

Students produce visible evidence of both economic understanding and balanced judgement.

## Firm growth analysis

- ✓ Method of growth
- ✓ Type of integration
- ✓ Relevant evidence from the case

## Completed SWOT

- ✓ At least one clear point per category
- ✓ Appropriate economic vocabulary
- ✓ Benefits + risks

## Client-ready briefing

- ✓ Explain the growth decision
- ✓ Give reasons
- ✓ Present the SWOT
- ✓ Respond to peer feedback

**Success criteria progress from basic recall (5–6) → sound application (7–8) → comprehensive, accurate analysis (9–10).**

## What can another teacher borrow from this case?

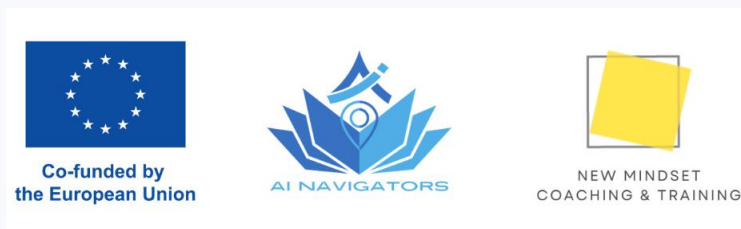
A replicable pattern for using AI without outsourcing the learning.

**“It went very well, the group was engaged and interested in the different case studies.”**

— Rocío Jordán Padilla

### REPLICATE THE PATTERN

- Use AI to create richer, age-appropriate cases.
- Move from pairs → expert roles → group synthesis.
- Give students a real-world role and audience.
- Assess the product and the reasoning, not AI use itself.



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