

# Idea Generation Kit



## **CHALLENGING** Plastic Waste

With the support of the



European  
**Social Innovation**  
Competition 2019

**How can we create more economic, social and environmental value in our communities? Over the last few years, the European Social Innovation Competition has mobilised thousands of Europeans to tackle that question. Whether the issue is how to make digital transformation inclusive, providing refugees with opportunities to take part in society or using place-based approaches for empowering young people in a changing economy: social innovation is about coming up with new responses to societal needs and problems.**

This year, we are looking for the most innovative approaches to [Challenging Plastic Waste](#). Millions of tonnes of plastic waste are generated each year. For example in the EU alone, 27.1 million tonnes of post-consumer plastic was collected in 2016. We need new solutions for the design, production and use of plastics, as well as for the collection, sorting and recycling of plastic waste and sustainable alternatives to fossil-based plastics.

Ideas can be products, services, processes or organisational models. Social innovation concerns the process of developing and deploying new effective solutions to challenging and often systemic social and environmental issues.

This Idea Generation Kit aims to support you in stepping forward and developing your own ideas to tackle plastic waste. By drawing on the first two stages of the innovation spiral (see Figure 1 on page 3), we present ways to explore opportunities and challenges, as well as generate ideas. To apply to the European Social Innovation Competition, an idea is all you need.

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**The European Social Innovation Competition team**

*Nesta, Kennisland, Scholz & Friends, Ashoka Spain & European Network of Living Labs (ENoLL), in collaboration with the European Commission.*

# Developing your ideas with the Idea Generation Kit

This Idea Generation Kit consists of the following chapters:

## **1. Exploring opportunities and challenges**

This stage concerns assessing the reasons innovation might be necessary. When exploring opportunities, it is key to use a systemic lens to analyse the social or environmental problem you want to address. Are you considering the whole issue including its root causes, or are you just looking at the tip of the iceberg?

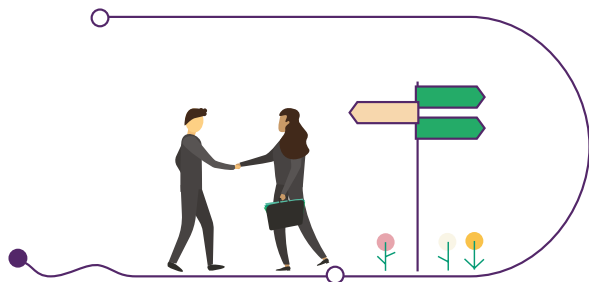
## **2. Reframing your question**

This stage is about considering the context of the problem you have identified. Reframing your question allows you to challenge your own assumptions: could it be that the problem is caused by something unexpected? Taking the time to reframe the question prevents you from moving on to a solution too quickly.

## **3. Generating ideas**

This is the stage of idea generation. Sometimes an idea spontaneously pops up out of nowhere, but there are also many prompts or design and creativity methods that you can use to increase the number of options you have to choose from.

These chapters draw on the concept of first two stages of the Social Innovation Spiral (Figure 1 on the next page).



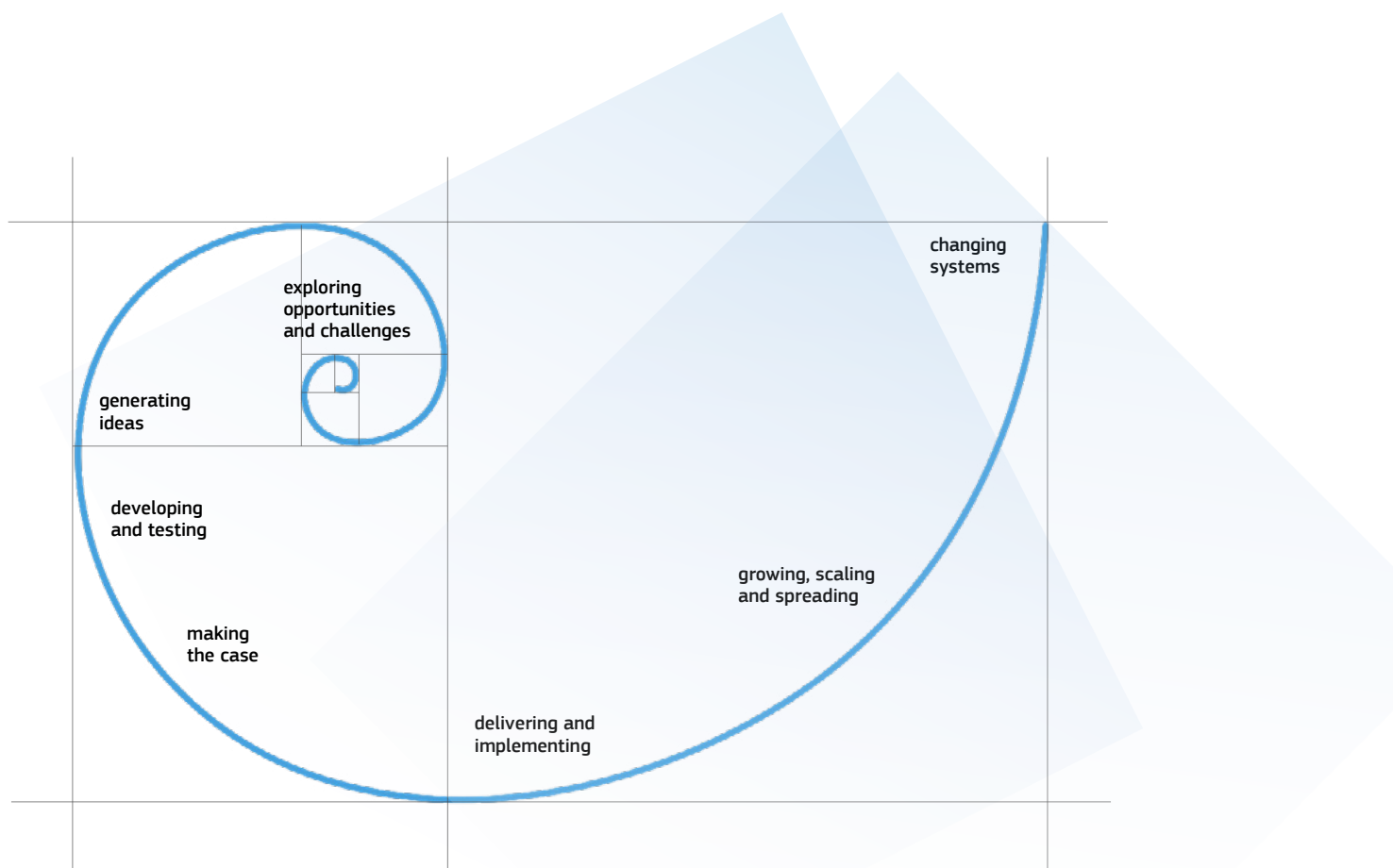
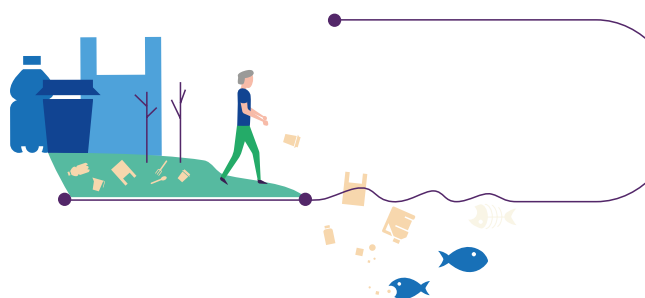


Figure 1. The Social Innovation Spiral. Source: p. 11 [The Open Book of Social Innovation](#), Nesta 2010 CC BY-NC-SA



# 1

Exploring  
opportunities  
and challenges

**Ideas for innovation are often sparked by new information or events that expose a social need. Such prompts can mobilise groups of people and trigger action and innovation. Once you recognise a certain problem, it is crucial to understand its root causes. Often, what is identified as the problem in the first instance, turns out to be just the tip of the iceberg of underlying causes.**

If you want to address a social problem, it is paramount to understand the underlying dynamics. Therefore, the most important task in this stage is identifying the right problem by framing or reframing the question at play – even if you spontaneously came up with a great idea. This year, the European Social Innovation Competition is focussing on the problem of plastic waste.

It is advisable to firstly look at what research already exists about the problem you are addressing, and how people have developed solutions before you. This allows you to save time and resources on generating and collecting information. Are you actually innovating, or re-inventing the wheel? Figure 2, the [causes diagram](#) from Nesta's DIY Toolkit, offers a clear way of separating and prioritising issues related to the topic you are addressing.

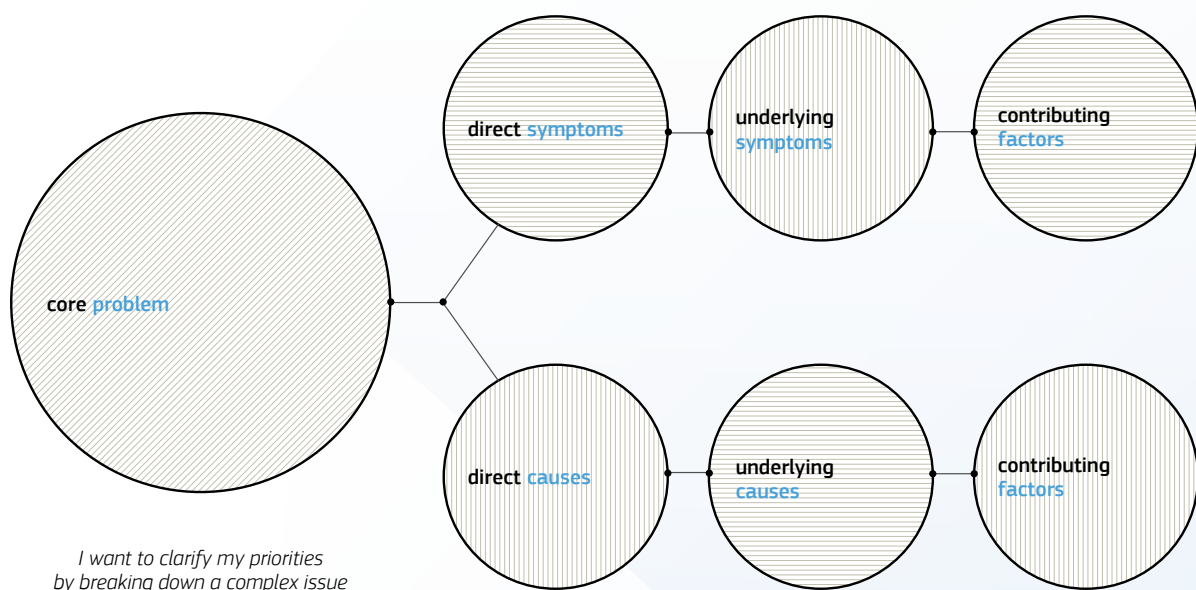


Figure 2: Causes diagram. Source: [DIY Toolkit Problem definition](#) CC BY-NC-SA

## Tools and methods for exploring opportunities and challenges:

- ▶ Nesta has mapped out various innovation methods and approaches in their [Landscape of innovation approaches](#) and [Compendium of Innovation Methods](#).
- ▶ For a better understanding of the issue you want to address, you can use the [Using research evidence practice guide](#) and perform [market research](#) to explore what is already happening in the field.
- ▶ [Horizon scanning](#) and [backcasting](#) provide a sense of possible futures and scenarios that could unfold in the field you are focussing on. This method helps you to identify emerging trends which might shape how or what you innovate.
- ▶ You can use the [Experience tour](#) to learn at first hand from other initiatives in your field by visiting them.
- ▶ The resource [Understand my audiences](#) helps you to understand and engage with the people who are dealing with the issue first hand.
- ▶ From the first moment onwards, it is key to generate ideas with potential users to understand their perspective. These tools by IDEO support you in conducting [interviews](#) and [group interviews](#) to support User Centered Design.



# 2

Reframing  
your question

**Reframing your question involves investigating the context in which something is considered a problem. As a simple example, a vehicle exceeding the speed limit is a problem when the driver is a regular member of the public, but can actually serve a societal benefit when it is an ambulance or fire truck on its way to an emergency. Reframing demands you to take a step back and wonder whether you have considered multiple angles to look at your issue.**

Reframing a social issue challenges your assumptions: It might turn out that the problem you want to address is actually caused by something unexpected. You need to keep an open mind at this stage as you may need to change direction. Investing time in posing the right questions prevents you from moving on to implementation of a solution too quickly, which can lead to a limited impact, or even negative impact, from your innovation. At the end of this stage you should have explored relevant opportunities and challenges, reframed your question and found the 'right' question or problem for the issue you want to address. For the 2019 Competition's theme of Challenging Plastic Waste, you can find an exploration of the issue and the different potential solutions on our [blog](#).

#### **Tools and methods for reframing the question:**

- ▶ To help open up a problem and define the wider context and associated issues involved, you can use the [problem definition worksheet](#). By approaching the question from different point of views, each angle provides a different perspective and reveals new insights and ideas.
- ▶ The [Question Toolkit](#) helps you to ask the right questions. The tools offered here are about asking 'why', and using probing critical questions.
- ▶ The [Reframing Tool](#) by THNK helps you to generate creative approaches for issues you are dealing with in your work.



# 3

## Generating ideas

**The second stage of the innovation spiral invites you to use your creativity to generate concrete ideas. Ideas can come from all kinds of places. Sometimes they just pop up into your head, sometimes they are borrowed, and sometimes they can be sourced from a crowd. Existing ideas can be reframed, or new collaborations can help foster fresh ideas. Successful idea generation and selection requires individuals and teams to switch between two modes: Developing new ideas (divergent mode) and selecting the best ideas (convergent mode).**

The first – the divergent mode – is about opening up possibilities. This process should be positive and collaborative to reach the best results. Create many new ideas: Many might seem useless, but you may eventually hit upon a great, radical and transformative idea. The second mode – the convergent mode – concerns evaluating your options and selecting the best ones, so that you can move forward. The challenge lies in identifying what ideas have the most potential, developing them further and then bringing them to life. The Double Diamond design process in Figure 3 helps you to be explicit about the mode you need to be operating in at different stages of your innovation process, and the attitudes and behaviours you need to adopt in each mode.

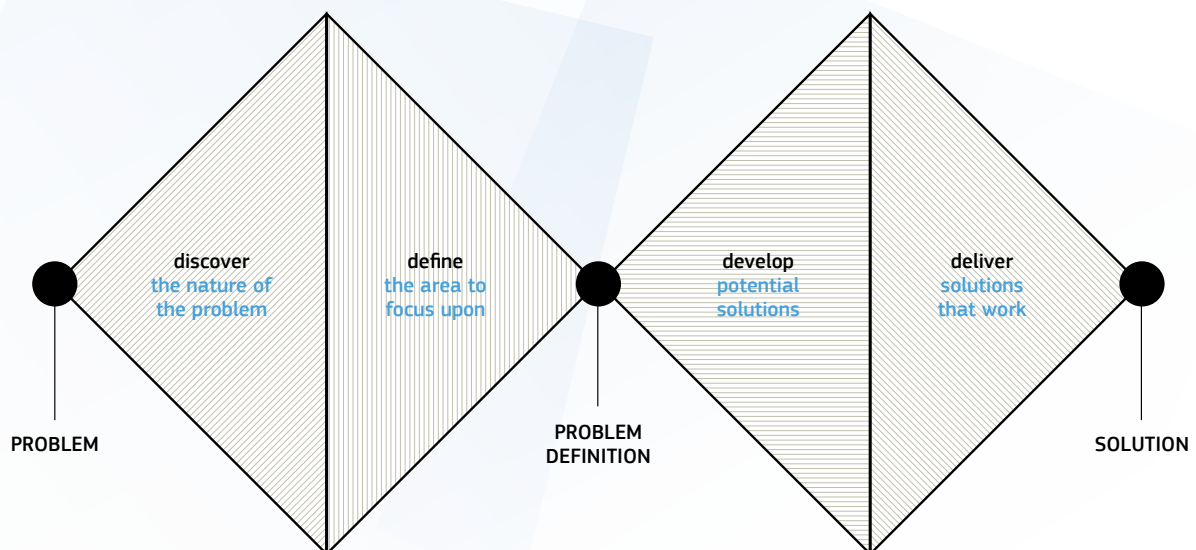


Figure 3. Double Diamond design process (Adapted from Design Council 2015) Source: [Nesta Playbook for Innovation](#), p. 68 CC BY-NC-SA

### Methods and tools for developing new ideas:

- ▶ With a little help from your friends: Organise an [Unconference](#) or Open Space Conference. You can organise a bottom-up gathering where all participants can claim time and space to initiate a discussion on a topic or idea. Another method for enabling conversations completely driven by participants and topics that are relevant and important to them is the [World Café method](#).
- ▶ The [Creative Workshop](#) method allows you to share experiences and expertise, and to come up with new solutions or ideas.
- ▶ The [Fast idea generator worksheet](#) is designed to challenge your thinking with regards to your initial concept, by applying different scenarios to it.
- ▶ The tool [Six thinking hats](#) supports group discussions by allowing participants to separate their thinking into six different roles.
- ▶ To quickly come up with new ideas and build on each other's ideas you can use the [Idea speed dating method](#).

### Methods and tools for selecting the best ideas:

- ▶ The [Idea and concept development approach](#) helps groups to work creatively and collaboratively and includes steps for idea selection and development.
- ▶ Read this article: [How to Select the Best Idea by the end of an Ideation Session](#) for some guidance on how to pick the best ideas.
- ▶ You can also cluster your ideas based on relevance, feasibility and potential impact, and use the following questions to select the best ideas:
  - *What is new and innovative about your idea?*
  - *What other related initiatives are happening in your country or wider region?*
  - *Where have you taken inspiration from, and how does your idea differ?*
  - *Can your idea exist alongside other products or services?*
  - *Are there any potential intellectual property issues?*





# Colophon

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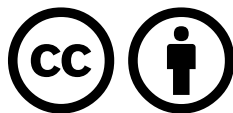
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