Escape Rooms for Green Entrepreneurship

PEDAGOGICAL SEQUENCE

# The Invisible Chain



KEY TOPICS

**supply chain basics | labor conditions | transparency**

Target group: learners aged 16+
Duration: 4-5 sessions (approx. 45 - 60 minutes each)

## Introduction

Many everyday products are part of complex global supply chains that remain largely invisible to consumers. From raw material extraction to manufacturing, transport and retail, each stage involves people, environments and decisions that shape the ethical footprint of a product. Issues such as unfair labor conditions, environmental degradation and lack of transparency are often hidden behind simplified labels or marketing claims.

This preparatory pedagogical sequence introduces learners to the core concepts of supply chains, labor conditions, transparency and ethical responsibility. It prepares them to take part in the escape room “The Invisible Chain”, in which players investigates everyday products and uncover the hidden social and environmental impacts behind them.

As a result, learners will develop a foundational understanding of how supply chains work, how unethical practices can remain hidden, and how transparency can support more responsible decision-making during gameplay.

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## Overview of the pedagogical sequence

| SESSION | THEME | MAIN FOCUS | KEY METHODS |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Supply chain basics | Global production & connections | Presentation, discussion, mapping |
| 2 | Hidden labor & unfair practices | Working conditions, exploitation | Case examples, scenario analysis |
| 3 | Transparency & traceability | Labels, evidence & credibility | Source analysis, comparison tasks |
| 4 | Ethical supply chains & gameplay preparation | Synthesis & application | Mapping, discussion, review |



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## SESSION 1: Understanding supply chains

### Focus

Introduce the concept of supply chains and show how everyday products are connected to global production systems involving people, places and resources.

### Learning outcomes

Learners will be able to:

- Define what a supply chain is
- Identify the main stages of a global supply chain
- Explain how consumers are connected to workers and environments through products

### Key concepts, definitions and examples

#### Supply chain

The sequence of processes involved in producing and delivering a product, from raw material extraction to consumption and disposal.

Concrete example: A cotton T-shit involves cotton farming, spinning, fabric production, garment assembly, transport, retail and end-of-life disposal.

#### Global production

Production processes distributed across multiple countries, often shaped by cost, labor availability and regulation.

Concrete example: Electronic devices assembled in one country using minerals extracted in another and sold globally.

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**Consumer connection**

The idea that purchasing decisions link consumers to distant workers and environmental impacts, even if these connections are not immediately visible.

## Activities

- Introduction of key concepts using visual supply chain diagrams
- Group discussion: “Where does this product come from?”
- Mapping a simple product journey from raw material to shop shelf
- Identification of hidden or overlooked stages in familiar products

## Evaluation

Exit slip: Describe one stage of a product’s supply chain that you were previously unaware of.

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## SESSION 2: Hidden labor and unfair practices

### Focus

Build awareness of invisible labor, unsafe working conditions and systemic exploitation within global supply chains.

### Learning outcomes

Learners will be able to:

- Define key concepts related to labor conditions and exploitation
- Identify common indicators of unfair or unethical production
- Explain why such practices often remain hidden from consumers

### Key concepts, definitions and examples

#### Unfair labor practices

Work conditions that violate basic labor rights, including underpayment, excessive working hours or lack of safety.

Concrete example: Garment workers paid below a living wage.

#### Forced labor

Work performed involuntarily under threat or coercion.

Concrete example: Workers trapped by debt or withheld identification documents.

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## Unsafe working conditions

Work environments that expose workers to physical harm or health risks.

Concrete example: Mining without protective equipment.

## Activities

- Introduction of key concepts with real-world examples
- Scenario analysis: identifying ethical and unethical practices in short case descriptions
- Group discussion on who benefits from hidden labor and why it persists

## Scenario analysis - case descriptions

Learners read short scenarios describing working conditions in different production contexts. In groups, they identify whether the practices described appear fair, unfair or uncertain, and explain their reasoning.

## Examples on cases:

## Case 1 - Garment factory overtime

A clothing factory producing T-shirts for international brands requires workers to stay several hours beyond their normal shift during busy periods. Workers are paid for the extra hours, but refusing overtime may lead to losing future shifts.

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### Discussion prompts

- Is this situation fair or unfair?
- Do workers have a real choice in accepting overtime?
- What information would you need to evaluate this situation more clearly?

### Case 2 - Mining without protection

In a small mining operation extracting minerals used in electronics, workers use basic tools and often work without helmets, gloves or respiratory protection. The mine provides jobs in an area with few other employment opportunities.

### Discussion prompts

- What risks do workers face in this situation?
- Why might unsafe conditions still exist?
- Who might be responsible for improving safety?

### Case 3 - Recruitment through debt

Workers from a rural region are recruited to work in construction abroad. Before leaving, they must pay a large recruitment fee to an agency. Once they arrive, their passports are held by their employer until the debt is repaid.

### Discussion prompts

- Does this situation indicate forced labor?
- Why might workers accept such conditions?
- What warning signs are present in this scenario?

## Evaluation

Short written reflection: What makes labor conditions fair or unfair?

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## SESSION 3: Transparency and traceability

**Focus**

Develop learners' ability to evaluate claims, labels and information related to ethical production, sustainability and regulatory transparency.

**Learning outcomes**

Learners will be able to:

- Define transparency and traceability in supply chains
- Distinguish between credible and non-credible ethical and sustainability claims
- Explain why companies are required to report on social and environmental risks
- Use basic frameworks such as Fair Trade and CSRD to assess supply chain information

**Key concepts, definitions and examples**

**Transparency**

The extent to which companies openly share information about how and where products are made, including risks and impacts.

Concrete example: Publicly available supplier lists or sustainability reports.

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## Traceability

The ability to track a product's components and materials through each stage of the supply chain.

Concrete example: QR codes or digital product passports linking to sourcing information.

## Fair Trade

A certification system and set of principles aimed at ensuring fair wages, safe working conditions and workers' rights, particularly in global supply chains.

Why it matters: Fair Trade labels are often used as indicators of ethical production, but their scope and limitations must be understood.

Concrete example: Fairtrade-certified coffee guaranteeing minimum prices and labor standards for farmers.

## Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD)

An EU regulation requiring companies to report on their social and environmental impacts, risks and due diligence processes across their value chains.

Why companies must report: To increase transparency, accountability and comparability of sustainability practices across companies operating in the EU.

Concrete example: Large companies identifying and disclosing risks related to labor conditions in their supply chains.

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## Activities

- Short input introducing Fair Trade and CSRD as tools for transparency and risk identification
- Comparison of different product labels and company claims
- Analysis of short sourcing descriptions: transparent vs vague information
- Identification of missing information in simplified supply chain examples

## Evaluation

Group task: Choose one product and explain whether its supply chain appears transparent, using evidence.

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## SESSION 4: Ethical supply chains and gameplay preparation

**Focus**

Synthesize key concepts and prepare learners to apply their knowledge during the escape room.

**Learning outcomes**

Learners will be able to:

- Identify characteristics of more ethical supply chains
- Connect labor conditions and transparency to consumer responsibility
- Apply key concepts during the escape room investigation

### Key concepts, definitions and examples

#### Ethical supply chain

A supply chain that seeks to respect worker rights, reduce environmental harm and increase transparency.

Concrete example: Companies combining fair labor standards with clear sourcing information.

#### Consumer responsibility

The idea that informed purchasing decisions can influence production practices.

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## Activities

- Group synthesis discussion linking supply chains, labor and transparency
- Mapping a simplified ethical supply chain model
- Review of key vocabulary and explanation of how concepts appear in the escape room

## Evaluation

Short checklist quiz covering core concepts and terms.

### Checklist quiz: Core concepts review

Learners answer the following questions individually or in pairs. The quiz reviews key concepts introduced throughout the pedagogical sequence.

### Questions

1. What is a supply chain?

a) A system used by companies to advertise products
b) The sequence of processes involved in producing and delivering a product
c) A list of companies that sell the same product

Correct answer: b

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2. Which of the following is an example of a stage in a supply chain?
a) Raw material extraction
b) Marketing campaigns
c) Customer reviews

Correct answer: a

3. What is meant by “unfair labor practices”?
a) Working conditions that violate basic labor rights
b) Jobs that require special training
c) Work that takes place in another country

Correct answer: a

4. Which situation may indicate forced labor?
a) Workers receive free training
b) Workers cannot leave their job because their passports are withheld
c) Workers receive overtime pay

Correct answer: b

5. What does transparency in supply chains refer to?
a) Companies sharing information about where and how products are made
b) Products being sold at lower prices
c) Companies advertising their products online

Correct answer: a

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6. What is traceability?

a) The ability to track a product's materials and components through the supply chain
b) The ability to transport products quickly
c) The process of selling products in different countries

Correct answer: a

7. What is the purpose of certifications such as Fair Trade?

a) To guarantee the lowest product price
b) To support fair wages, safer working conditions
c) To increase product advertising

Correct answer: b

8. Why do regulations such as the CSRD exist?

a) To require companies to report on their environmental and social impacts
b) To reduce the number of products on the market
c) To control product prices

Correct answer: a

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**Facilitator note (optional)**

Review the answers together and clarify any misunderstandings before starting the escape room activity.

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