

The North Europe Schools' Symposium 2025 Challenge

Common to all topics of the North Europe Schools' Symposium is our various societies' approach to a theme with which we all identify. At the inaugural NESS 2023 we examined the topic of international relations; at NESS 2024 sport and society; and at NESS 2025 we will look at tourism: its evolution over time, its role in economic development, its impact on the individual, and its particular place in our modern world and the future. Prague is one of the world's most beautiful and visited cities, so it is the most fitting of venues to explore the topic.

The challenge of the North Europe Schools' Symposium 2025 is for students, after examining the evolution of tourism in our societies and globally, its role in economic development, its impact on the individual, and its current and possible future states, to suggest the practical steps they and their societies can take to best balance the costs and benefits of tourism, with particular relevance to the countries of NESS schools.

NESS 2025 has the central purpose of bringing together intellectually curious students from different schools to consider the topic of tourism, with particular insight from their own perspectives. As with the Winchester International Symposium, the core elements of NESS will be the intellectual talent and commitment of the students, and the distinct cultural backgrounds that will illuminate their contributions. In other words, a shared scholarship together with a unique cultural perspective will create an extremely fertile forum for discussing ideas. At NESS we aim to look specifically at the role and importance of tourism in our different societies, to identify the unique as well as common factors that have contributed to the economic and social impact of tourism, and to look at the particular opportunities and challenges our systems and societies face with regard to tourism, and to propose practical ways to best balance them.

Students from the group of Symposium schools will come together in Prague in June 2025, after having worked online for six months on the topic areas overleaf. Each school will draft a monthly 750-word response to a particular question set within each topic area; the response will follow a month of discussion of the issues arising from an introductory essay. The response will be posted online in the shared *Google* group, and submitted to TJP. Students will thus have a further week in which they are expected to comment on others' submitted responses.

TJP will send students the introductory essay on each topic area, together with required and suggested reading, on the dates overleaf. Intermediate tasks – such as reading relevant articles, watching *YouTube* or TED talks, listening to podcasts – will also be assigned as appropriate.

Student pairs will pursue a personal project (PP) which will examine one aspect of tourism for their own society. The specific project must gain prior approval. Students must submit their completed project presentations to TJP, by means of *YouTube* upload (or other common video format) one month before the beginning of the Symposium; this will allow for greater consistency, as well as for accurate time management at the Symposium.

At NESS 2025, students will discuss ideas, attend daily debates, talks from expert speakers, and responses to prompts that will allow them to use their online work. These responses will take the form of short presentations. At the end of the week, students will come together to draft The Symposium Accord, which will be a common response to The Symposium Challenge. TJP will send examples of PPs, GW presentations, and Symposium Accords so students and teachers know what to expect.

Symposium Online Topic Schedule (and deadlines)

Dec 9 - Jan 13 2025	<p>Block 1: Tourism and Economic Development</p> <p>The evolution of tourism in different societies. How economies develop from agriculture, via manufacturing, to the service sector. The role of tourism in advancing economic growth in certain societies; the necessary conditions for such a role (including but not limited to geography, government stability, language). How far governments might wish to limit tourism for political purposes (e.g. North Korea).</p>
Jan 20 - Feb 24	<p>Block 2: Tourism and the Individual</p> <p>How far does travel and tourism broaden the mind? The impact of particular individual experiences. Tourism and social media. “White saviour” tourism. Openness to the challenges of travel (such as physical danger, legal risks, working on a tourist visa), as well as the opportunities. Risk-taking with regard to culture, food, and political differences. Negative effects on individuals from tourism in their locality.</p>
March 3 - April 7	<p>Block 3: Tourism in the Modern World</p> <p>Changing real cost of air fares. Low-cost airlines. Effects of the pandemic. Airbnb and short-term lets. Cruise ships and the challenges and opportunities for port cities; the special case of Venice. The role of architecture in promoting and coping with tourism. Protests against tourism in summer 2024. The role of central and local government. Prague as a case study for many of these issues.</p>
April 14 - May 19	<p>Block 4: The Future of Tourism</p> <p>How will tourist flows look in the future? Changing attitudes to travel and tourism. Social media and technology as a tool to promote and/or manage tourism. Pricing access to city centres and/or tourist sites. Protecting heritage and architecture while providing access. Balancing the likely costs and benefits of tourism.</p>
March 31	<p>Deadline for Personal Project approval</p> <p>Students must complete an independent and original investigation into an aspect of sport of their choice, but from their home country, concentrating on one of the four themes above. The project must be approved by TJP by March 31, 2025. The completed investigation must be uploaded or sent as a video presentation by May 20, 2025 and take no more than ten minutes to present in total; this will be the same presentation that the students will give at NESS and will simply enable TJP to be assured of the content and timing.</p>
May 19, 2025	<p>Personal Project work</p> <p>Students submit completed personal projects to TJP</p>

Karel Žďárek, Principal, Johannes Kepler Grammar School, Prague
Tim Parkinson (TJP), NESS Academic Director