

Project title: DigitalCRAFT: Enhancing Vocational Skills Through Design Thinking and Graphic Design

Project No. 2023-1-RO01-KA210-VET-000166913

Project implemented by the Free Education Union of Bacău County (SLI BACĂU) in partnership with UN-LAB -Italy

TRANSFORMING VET EDUCATION THROUGH DESIGN THINKING AND GRAPHIC DESIGN: A NECESSITY FOR THE FUTURE

In an ever-changing world where creativity and innovative thinking are key factors for professional success, education needs to adapt and provide learning methods relevant to today's economic reality. The integration of Design Thinking and Graphic Design methodologies into the curriculum of vocational education and training brings significant benefits, contributing to the development of essential skills for the future workplace. The Erasmus+ DigitalCraft project, implemented by the Free Education Union of Bacău County in partnership with UN-LAB Italy, demonstrates the real impact of these modern approaches on teachers and students in the VET system.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO INTEGRATE DESIGN THINKING AND GRAPHIC DESIGN IN VET EDUCATION?

Vocational education and training plays a key role in preparing students for the job market. However, the traditional curriculum does not always emphasize the development of creativity, critical thinking and problem-solving skills - essential competences in a dynamic professional environment. The integration of Design Thinking and Graphic Design offers a new perspective on teaching and learning, facilitating a more interactive, collaborative and innovation-oriented approach.

WHAT IS DESIGN THINKING AND HOW IS IT TRANSFORMING EDUCATION?

Design Thinking is a problem-solving methodology based on an **iterative and user-centered approach** that stimulates **creativity** and encourages **innovation**. The process includes five main steps:

1. **Empathy** - Deep understanding of students' needs and the challenges they face.
2. **Problem Definition** - Clear identification of educational challenges and learning objectives.
3. **Idea Generation** - Creating innovative solutions through brainstorming and divergent thinking.
4. **Prototyping** - Rapidly develop solutions through visual assets and digital materials.
5. **Testing** - Continuously experimenting and adjusting solutions to improve the learning experience.

By applying Design Thinking in VET education, teachers can **create more dynamic learning environments geared to the needs of the labor market**, giving students the opportunity to experiment, think critically and find innovative solutions to real problems.

GRAPHIC DESIGN IN VET: A TOOL FOR DEVELOPING DIGITAL COMPETENCES

Graphic design is a creative field, an important tool for improving visual communication and learning.

Through the training activities carried out between October and November 2024, within the ERASMUS+ **DIGITALCRAFT** project, the **112 teachers** from VET pre-university education units in Bacău County learned to use **digital platforms such as Canva, CapCut and TimelineJS** to transform didactic content into engaging visual materials:

- **Creating engaging educational resources** - Infographics, interactive presentations, educational videos and interactive timelines.
- **Improve visual communication skills** - Students learn to convey messages in a clear, concise and aesthetically pleasing way.
- **Developing digital skills** - Essential in many industries, from digital marketing to media production and architecture.
- **Increasing student engagement** - Visual resources make learning more accessible and interesting.

DIGITALCRAFT PROGRAM RESULTS: REAL IMPACT ON VET EDUCATION

The implementation of Design Thinking and Graphic Design methodologies in courses for VET teachers has had a **significant impact** on the way they perceive the use of technology and innovative methods in teaching.

- ❖ 92.3% of the teachers participating in the training program of the ERASMUS+ **DIGITALCRAFT** Project consider that the digital tools used in the course are very applicable in their daily work.
- ❖ 83.5% of the teachers recognized *Design Thinking* as a valuable method for teaching and learning, compared to only 31.7% who had heard of it vaguely before the course.
- ❖ 87.8% of learners feel well or very well prepared in using the digital tools covered in the course.

The use of Canva and interactive platforms in lessons has increased significantly and teachers have started to create more dynamic presentations, visuals and digital resources tailored to students' needs.

HOW CAN DESIGN THINKING AND GRAPHIC DESIGN BE INTEGRATED INTO THE CURRICULUM?

1. **Creating interactive lessons based on collaboration and innovation**
2. **Using technology to visualize content and personalize learning**
3. **Stimulating students' creativity and developing critical thinking**
4. **Improving assessment methods using digital resources**

By integrating these methods, VET education becomes more attractive, more adapted to the requirements of the labor market and more oriented towards the real development of students' competences.

CONCLUSION: A NEW PARADIGM FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

The DIGITALCRAFT project demonstrates that innovative methods such as Design Thinking and Graphic Design can revolutionize VET education, giving teachers the tools to transform the teaching process and prepare students for the future workplace.

For VET teachers and trainers, the adoption of these methodologies represents a unique opportunity to modernize teaching, increase learner engagement and provide them with the skills needed in a digitalized economy.

Vocational education needs to adapt to the realities of the modern labor market - and the integration of Design Thinking and Graphic Design is an essential step in this direction.



Co-funded by
the European Union

📌 **Want to learn more about the impact of this project?** Follow **DigitalCraft**'s news and resources on our website - and join the teachers innovating VET education! 🚀