



Erasmus+

Thrive! Entrepreneurial skills as solid base
for a future in the Creative Industry

Module 1

Starters / Young Entrepreneurs

Course outline and teachers' manual



Erasmus+

The “Thrive! Entrepreneurial skills as solid base for a future in the Creative Industry” project has as central aim to support the (young) (female) entrepreneurs and companies and its employees in the creative sector to go through a transformation and innovation process that is necessary to survive the present times and to become a company with a sustainable business case.

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The project partners within this program are:



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After the testing of the learning materials by the project partners in their home countries, the following additions were suggested to be relevant for the teacher’s manual.

Modularity and adaptability

The learning materials are designed to be modular and adaptable. With this, we mean that the materials should not necessarily be treated ‘as is’, but teachers and learners are invited to adapt them and to select elements they find valuable and skip other elements. While this is true for the three isolated modules in the learning materials (module 2, division of labour; module 5, ethical and sustainable thinking; module 7, motivation and perseverance), the other modules are part of a larger human-centered design process. While this process can of course be adapted or cut short, we do recommend running this whole process, especially if you have no prior experience with human-centered design.

Class management and role of the teacher

While the role of the teacher might seem limited in the set-up of these learning materials, the testing has shown that there still is an important facilitating role for the teacher. Student groups, in our experience, tend to skip or rush certain steps in the human-centered design process, and it is the task of the teacher guard the quality of the design process. This can for instance be done by questioning the conclusions the student reach to make the students see that their work is not done, and more analysis is needed. The *five why’s* approach (see module 4) can work for the teacher as well to question the students’ results.

Business modelling

With regards to business modelling, the role of the teacher becomes important, according to our testing. Students who are not experienced in business modelling often tend to go for obvious solutions in this respect, and it can be the role of the teacher to stimulate them to dig deeper and think more creatively. When you as a teacher feel you lack experience in this field, perhaps invite colleagues or other experts to co-facilitate module 8.

In addition, we noticed a minority of the students disregarding business modelling as a topic that is not relevant for them, as they claim they are creative students and these kind of topics does not fit their profile. In those cases, it can be relevant to find arguments in the desk research of the Thrive projects to show them that for future job profiles in the creative industries, a certain level of business thinking becomes inevitable.

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Course information

This module covers 3 ECTS, including (interactive) classwork, homework and a teachers' manual. 1 ECTS corresponds to on average 28 hours of activity per student, including classes, homework and assessment/examination.

The module consists of a more theoretical part, and assignments. We suggest teaching ca. 45 minutes per module, and spend 1 or 2 hours working on the assignments in a workshop setting. This means that your role as a teacher, for a large part will be that of a coach. With your knowledge and experience you will guide the student teams through their own assignment. This requires new competences from teachers, and if you need it, you might expand or update your schooling on topics like coaching and providing feedback.

The module focusses on a wicked problem, presented by a client (cf. the value creation pedagogy, Lackeus, 2016). The students work in teams to propose a solution to the problem, using a typical design thinking / human-centered design methodology. In this module, this methodology is extended with literature and exercises focusing on three topics, that were found to be extremely relevant and lacking in many current entrepreneurship learning modules: motivation and perseverance, ethical and sustainable thinking, and team composition and complementarity. Additionally, other competences which have been shown by research to be important to the development of young entrepreneurs - basic business skills, self-management, project and team management, networking and personal wellbeing - will be addressed within the modules.

The contents of the course are based on research carried out within the THRIVE project, specifically a country study on the existing competences within the creative industries¹ and a study on future profiles in the creative industries, forecasting the situation in 2026². This most important take-aways from these studies for these materials were:

- We expect companies in the creative industries to either develop in horizontal integrations (large companies) or specialisation (smaller companies).
- Digital economy and digital competences (incl. adaptivity and design thinking) will become increasingly important.
- A thorough understanding of business models will be increasingly important.
- Additionally, personal skills to become increasingly important are self-management, project management and teamworking, networking.

Additionally, a short survey was carried out amongst young entrepreneurs in Belgium and the UK, to get an indication of the need of the target audience. Based on the EntreComp framework³, participants were asked how important they consider each competence, and how they would assess their own level regarding the competences. With the result a gap analysis

¹ THRIVE Output 1.1: Country study: How future-proof are the creative industries?

<https://www.thriveproject.eu/research-output-1-1-country-study.html>

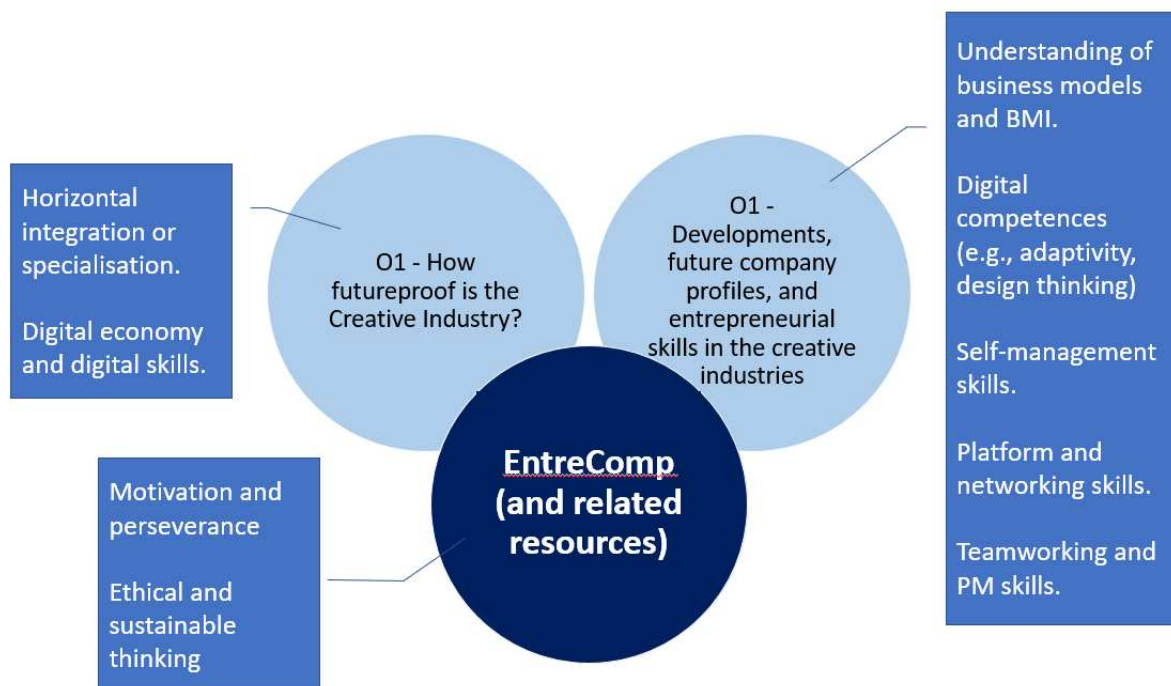
² THRIVE Output 1.2: Developments, future company profiles, and entrepreneurial skills.

<https://www.thriveproject.eu/research-1-2-development-profiles-and-skills.html>

³ <https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/entrecomp>

was made to identify the competences with the highest importance yet the lowest level of mastery according to the self-reporting. The competences *Motivation and perseverance* and *Ethical and sustainable thinking* showed the biggest perceived gaps, and for these reasons dedicated modules on these topics were added to this course.

As such, idea the materials in this course are based on, come from the following three sources:



As a final remark, the authors would like to stress, that since the contents are selected based on a gap analysis, the materials should not be considered as a holistic approach to prepare students and young entrepreneurship for entrepreneurship. Instead, the course should be seen as additional to the existing entrepreneurship education programmes, addressing the most important gaps, rather than as a replacement.

Course outline

The course consists of the following eight components. Each component consists of literature, optional slides for teachers, and practical assignments for the students. It is up to the course organisation to determine how long a component lasts. Per module, we suggest to take 45 mins to one hour of teacher (depending on what your schedule looks like), and 1 to 2 hours of workshop. Of course, the students can work on the course on their own time outside these workshops as well. With quarterly or semester courses, each component can take one or two weeks. In an intensive programme, each component can also be two days, with the students working fulltime on the project.

1. Introduction to design thinking / human-centered design to tackle wicked problems

Students learn the general process of design thinking / human-centered design. We follow the workflow used by the department of Graphic and Digital Media of Artevelde University College: <https://www.gdm.gent/design-meets-research/hcd/> In this stage, students need to understand the general process and its applications and benefits. They will discover the practical details in later stages.

Learning outcome: make students aware of the HCD process they will follow throughout the course.

2. Division of labor: team composition and complementarity

Now that students know what they will have to do, they need to divide roles in their team. They will analyse both their technical skills needed for the assignment, as well as their personal soft skills. Students will also analyse which competences they lack in their team, and how they will deal when these competences will be required. The young entrepreneurs will understand the importance of balanced team skills and the personal soft skills needed to motivate and get the best out of a team. This will be especially important when working team members who are independent sub-contractors whose motivation may be different to the employed members.

Learning outcome: students know about different roles one can take in a team. They can analyse their own role as well as the roles needed and provided within their team.

3. Client introduction and problem briefing

Students will learn who the client is, and what the problem is they are going to provide a solution for. This module will include preparation work by the students to make a professional impression and ask relevant questions after the briefing. This will involve an understanding of the roles that the complementary skills of the team can play in a team investigation and presentation.

Learning outcomes: students learn how to prepare for and interpret a briefing from a client.

4. Finding the problem (discover and define)

This is the first 'diamond' of the methodology. Via a process of divergence and convergence, students will analyse the problem and find its root causes to be tackled. The practical work for this component will run for two periods, in parallel with component 5.

Learning outcomes: students learn to empathise with target audiences and perform practical research for a specific (entrepreneurial) problem.

5. Ethical and sustainable thinking

Here, the relationship between formal business practice and ethical actions will be linked. Teams and individuals will be reminded to take account of the implications of their decisions regarding sustainability, society, etc. Students will learn about ethical and sustainable questions, focussed on the creative industries. They will then apply the lessons learned on their own problem and potential solutions.

Learning outcomes: students become aware about ethical and sustainable thinking in their field and learn to reflect on the consequences of their entrepreneurial venture.

6. Finding the solution: ideate and prototype

The second 'diamond' again follows a process of divergence and convergence. Students will brainstorm and develop multiple solutions through cheap prototypes, test them, and come up with their best solution. The practical work for this component will run for two periods, in parallel with component 7.

Learning outcomes: students know how to generate ideas based on research, and how to create quick prototypes so ideas can be validated in the real world.

7. Motivation and perseverance

Young entrepreneurs may have initial enthusiasm, but that will only take them so far. Combining the individual talents of a team, whether on or off payroll, can build stress levels which must be managed. This can have an impact on both team members and one's own wellbeing and therefore particular attention will be given to these issues.

Students will learn about motivation and perseverance, both on a personal and a team level. Using the theory, they can reflect on the work performed in the past components.

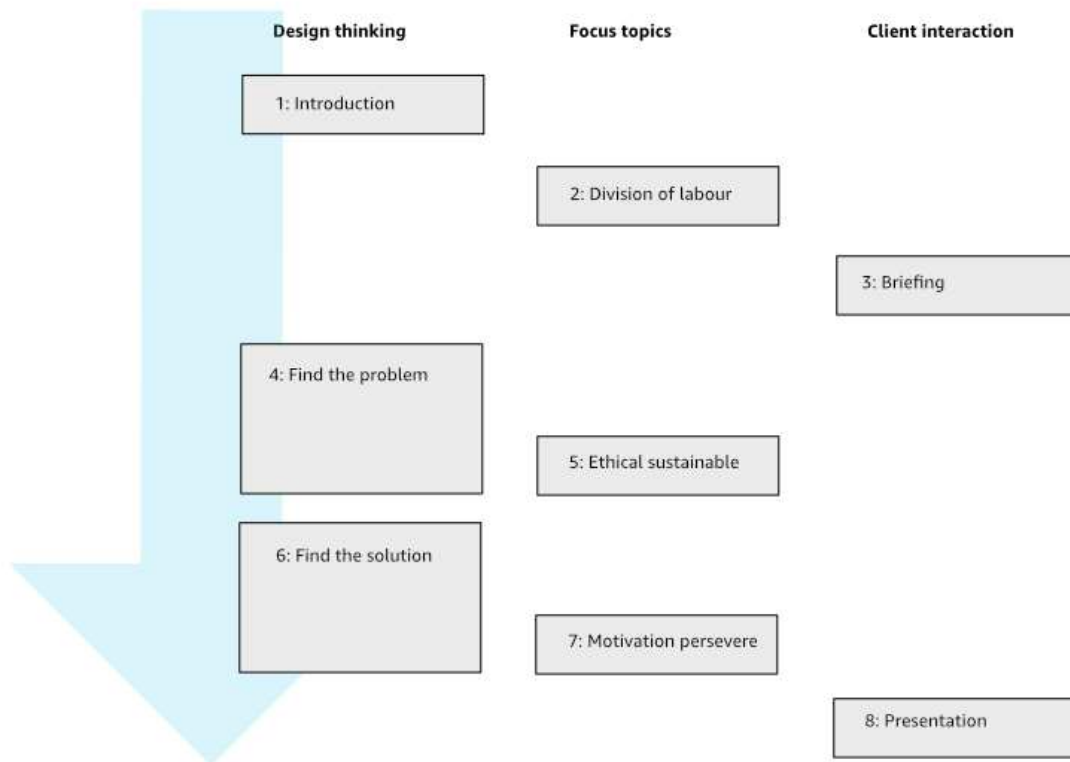
Learning outcomes: students learn about motivation and perseverance and can apply certain analytical skills to their own professional work.

8. Implementation and presentation

During the last component, the students will plan the implementation of their idea, based on a business model. Finally, the students present their solution to the client, to the teachers, and to other teams (if the course ran with multiple teams in parallel). As well as an exercise in mobilising team skills and contributions, this will test an individual's all-round business knowledge of finance and planning. It will also test the project management skills

Learning outcomes: students learn to wrap up a large body of work into the core elements relevant for a specific audience, and are able to present them in a dynamic and clear way.

Schematically, this looks as follows:



Teachers' instructions

If you plan on teaching the modules in this course, here are some specific point of attention.

Human-centered design

The course is based around the process of Human-Centered Design. There are many similar processes and derivatives, under a variety of names, like *Design Thinking*, *Design Research*, etc. As a teacher or course coordinator, you should be familiar with at least one of these processes.

Wicked problems

The course requires you to provide clients who provide wicked problems your students will work on.

A **wicked problem** is a problem that is not straightforward to solve, due to a variety of reasons, like:

- incomplete or contradictory information,
- a complexity involving a variety of stakeholders,
- changing or unknown requirements,
- a relation with other problems, obscuring the root cause.

The problem the students work on should be wicked and open. Ideally, they are questions starting with 'How...!'. They should not point towards one immediate solution but be open for wide interpretations. Good wicked problems are for instance:

- How can we improve the ecological footprint of print shops in region X?
- How can we spark an interest in art and design in school children between the ages of 12 and 16?
- How can we create more visibility for marketing agency Y?

Be careful to not already mention potential solutions in your problem description. The students should be open in their problem analysis and solution development.

Real clients

The problem(s) the students are working on should be presented by real clients. These do not need to be commercial enterprises, but they should be professional organisations active in the field of the problem. Business are okay, but so are governments, governmental organisations and NGOs.

The reason for working with real clients is that students are more motivated to create valuable solutions and learn when they feel their work is meaningful. This is stipulated by the *value creation pedagogy* by Martin Lackeus. He describes this as '*learning through creating value for others*', based on the ten elements below (taken from Lackeus (2016), p. 53):

Table 6. Definition of value creation as educational philosophy. Ten elements constituting a defining of value creation as educational philosophy.

No	Definition	Explanation / clarification
Learning-through...		
1	Let students learn...	The purpose is learning. Value creation is the means.
2	...by applying their existing and future...	Existing before the course, or future as a result of course.
3	...competencies...	In- or extra-curricular knowledge, skills and attitudes.
...creating value...		
4	...to create...	This is a creative assignment.
5	...something...	A physical, intellectual or cultural artifact (ie human creation)
6	...preferably novel...	The more novel, the more it is deemed "entrepreneurship".
7	...of value...	Value is subjective and intersubjective; decided by recipient.
...for others.		
8	...to at least one...	Someone(s) or something(s) capable of giving feedback.
9	...external stakeholder...	The more external, the more powerful but also the more scary.
10	...outside their group, class or school.	Three progression levels; in class, in school or outside school.

When finding real clients is not realistic for your teaching setting, then alternatives can be found. Examples are challenges proposed by the school, challenges proposed by other students, or challenges that students face in their companies (if they are in a dual system).

Facilities and materials

For their projects, your student teams need good places to work. Ideally, each time would have their own space or room, with walls they can hang flipcharts on. Especially during modules 3 to 7, students will need flipcharts, post-its (preferable different colors) and markers.

Additional information

Most modules in the syllabus end with a section called 'additional information'. Here you can find links to articles and media that give a deeper understanding of the topic. These suggestions can be considered as optional self-study materials for the students, but sometimes they also make for excellent media to show or discuss in class or during a workshop. As these links are suggestions, we leave it to your teaching expertise how to use them most effectively.

Evaluation

Student projects can be evaluated on a multitude of criteria. We do not prescribe evaluation criteria, as we believe teachers should set those themselves based on the learning goals they wish to achieve. However, for those teachers new to the human-centered design process, we do offer some suggestions to include:

- Briefing interpretation: did the students interpret the briefing of the client actively and correctly? Did they pro-actively request additional information? Did the students provide a good balance between the requests of the client and their own originality and initiative? Does the end result reflect the original briefing of the client?

- Finding the problem: Did the students empathise sufficiently with the stakeholders of the problem they were investigating? Did they go the extra mile? Did they get out of the comfort zone of their own experiences and did they learn new things about specific target audiences, or did they stayed with what they already knew?
- Finding the solution: Did the students go for obvious solutions, or did they explore original ideas? Were they able to make prototypes and learn from testing? How did they strike a balance between ambitious solutions and realistic solutions?
- Presentations: Did the students try to explain everything, or did they make a clear selection of what the most important points are? Did the students present from their own POV (point-of-view, e.g., explaining how they came to a solution) or did they think about the target audience and their questions and desires?