

# PART 01



## HUMAN CENTERED DESIGN FOR ADULT EDUCATORS

HOW HUMAN CENTRED DESIGN CAN  
MAKE A CHANGE IN YOUR PROJECTS

[www.creative-change.eu](http://www.creative-change.eu)



## **IN THIS FIRST PART OF THE GUIDE, YOU WILL**

- learn about the concept of the human-centered approach and why this is relevant for the management of EU-funded projects as well as for adult education;
- get to know the basic facts on Design Thinking in this context;
  - gain a better understanding of the concept of Empathy;
  - raise your awareness on the importance of switching your project management perspective from process-orientation to focusing on the people involved - your users and your project team members;
- find links to case studies and practical examples to illustrate how project managers and adult educators can apply the concept of Human Centered Design and Design Thinking in their work.

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# HUMAN CENTERED DESIGN - AN APPROACH TOWARDS CREATIVITY



## 1.1 HOW TO BRING MORE CREATIVITY INTO EU-FUNDED PROJECTS?

Working in EU funded projects means facing the challenge of developing new, innovative and creative concepts, tools and methodologies on the one hand. On the other hand, it also means working within framework conditions in which projects are planned and implemented according to the funding guidelines.

These guidelines are often relatively rigid and, as actors in the field, we also know that the resources provided have to be used efficiently. We can wonder, does this framework obstruct the creative process that is often needed in project management?

If we want to go beyond simply meeting the formal requirement criteria in our projects, and produce something that really benefits the target group in the long term, then we also have to delve further into project management!

We want to move away from statements such as

*"...but this is how we've always done it and it's always worked well..."*  
or *"why reinventing the wheel?"*



and expand our horizons! In Creative Change, this is precisely the guiding principle for the project work itself, and it also applies to the outputs that are generated.

## 1.2 WHAT DO WE MEAN, WHEN WE TALK ABOUT HUMAN CENTERED DESIGN?

In a nutshell, human-centered design (HCD) is an approach commonly used in design and management frameworks that develops solutions to problems by involving the human perspective in all steps of the problem-solving process.

### PRINCIPLES OF HUMAN-CENTERED DESIGN

- **Adopting multidisciplinary skills and perspectives** -> Involve people with different background
- **Clear understanding of the users, their tasks and environments** -> Know your user's needs
- **User-centered evaluation driven design** -> Your beneficiary's goals guide your project's development

- **Considering the overall consumer experience** -> Learn, collect and exchange people's stories
- **Involving the consumer in the design and production process** -> Let people participate
- **Iterative design process** -> use feedback loops and dialogue to reach the optimal solution

Projects that follow Human Centered Design principles and processes start with people and their wishes, ideas, doubts, etc. and end with new solutions that are tailored to the needs of a specific target group. Every organisation's process can look a little different, but they're similar overall.



## 1.3 HOW DOES HUMAN CENTERED DESIGN INFLUENCE PROJECT MANAGEMENT?

Transnational cooperation, especially in EU-funded projects, has long been a fast track to improving and innovating education services. Our ability to identify new solutions and work with colleagues from other sectors and countries can make the difference in bringing real change. However, while traditional project methodologies and cooperative philosophies have laid the foundations for modern project work, they can fall short in today's context.

Using a human centered approach in your projects does not only mean to focus on the people your project outcomes are designed for. It also means to focus on the needs of people you work with – your project team! In an era of expanding virtual communication, virtual cooperation and digitalisation, mostly emphasized by the covid-19 pandemic, it is becoming more and more important in all our activities to focus on the human component to create impact orientation on all levels of project management.

## 1.4 WHERE IS THE BENEFIT IN USING HUMAN CENTERED DESIGN?

- Human Centered design builds on the participatory approach by involving all actors in processes. This higher involvement will also lead to **higher motivation** in your project team!
  - Focusing on the **needs of your target group** leads to **higher effectiveness** of project results: We all know that ideas sometimes fail and that a prototype built and tested with end-users sometimes does not work in the end. But observing and engaging with users' needs from the beginning can **take much of the risk out** of your project.
  - Human Centered Design in project management helps to **develop solutions to problems** instead of just documenting them. This will raise the commitment of all project partners as well as the **value for the beneficiary**.
  - Applying creative methodologies brings **more fun** to the project and thus higher engagement and activation.
- But how can you put this into practice in your project work? The application of Design Thinking can be a key to project success.

## 1.5 WHAT IS DESIGN THINKING?

**Design Thinking is based on the assumption that problems can be solved** better when people from different disciplines work together in an environment that promotes creativity, jointly developing a solution.

### HUMAN CENTERED DESIGN AND DESIGN THINKING HAVE MANY ASPECTS IN COMMON:

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The most important basic principle and the greatest commonality of the two approaches is that **people are at the centre** of product or service development.

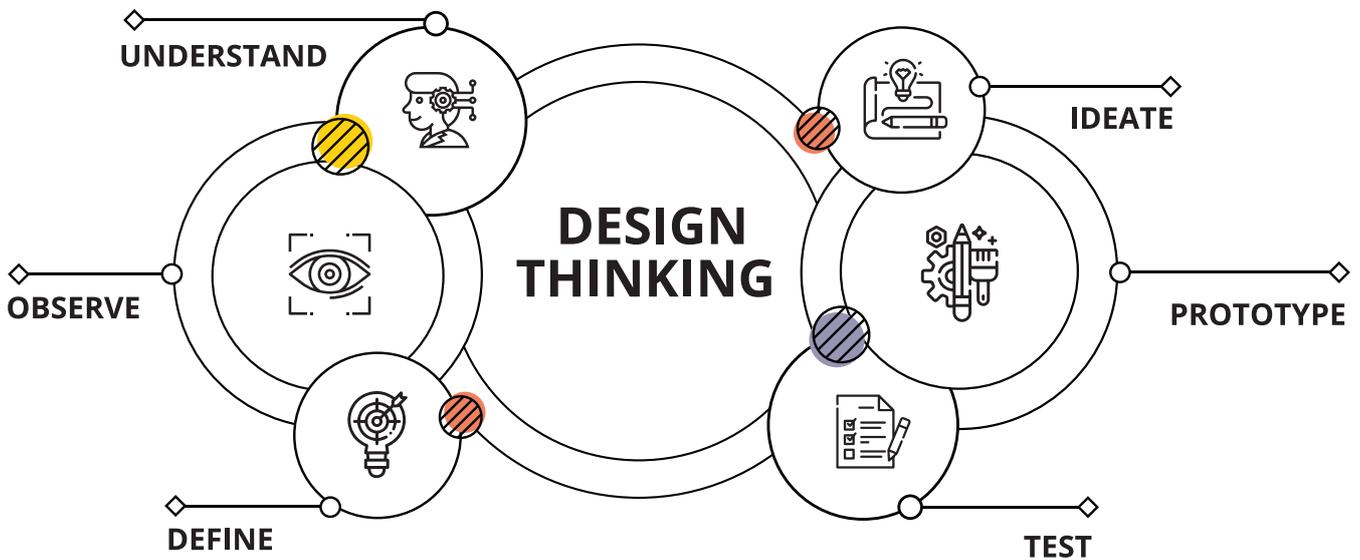
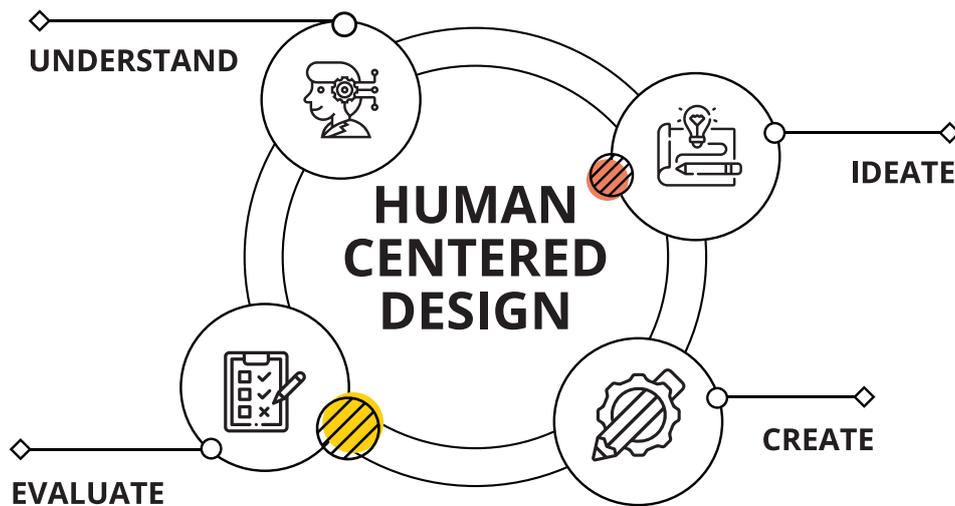
02

Another common feature is the **iterative** approach i.e. one-scene steps of concept development are repeated as often as necessary until a satisfactory solution is reached.

03

Also, the **analysis of the initial situation** plays a decisive role in both approaches.

While the procedure is very similar, the main difference between the two approaches is their objective. The goal of human-centered design is to ensure a high usability of a product or service and to consider user experiences in all stages of the development. Design thinking, on the other hand, aims to develop innovative and creative solutions to complex problems.



The objective of the Creative Change project is to bring more creativity and innovation into project management and adult education. **So, using the design thinking approach centered is an important key to reach this innovation in our context.**

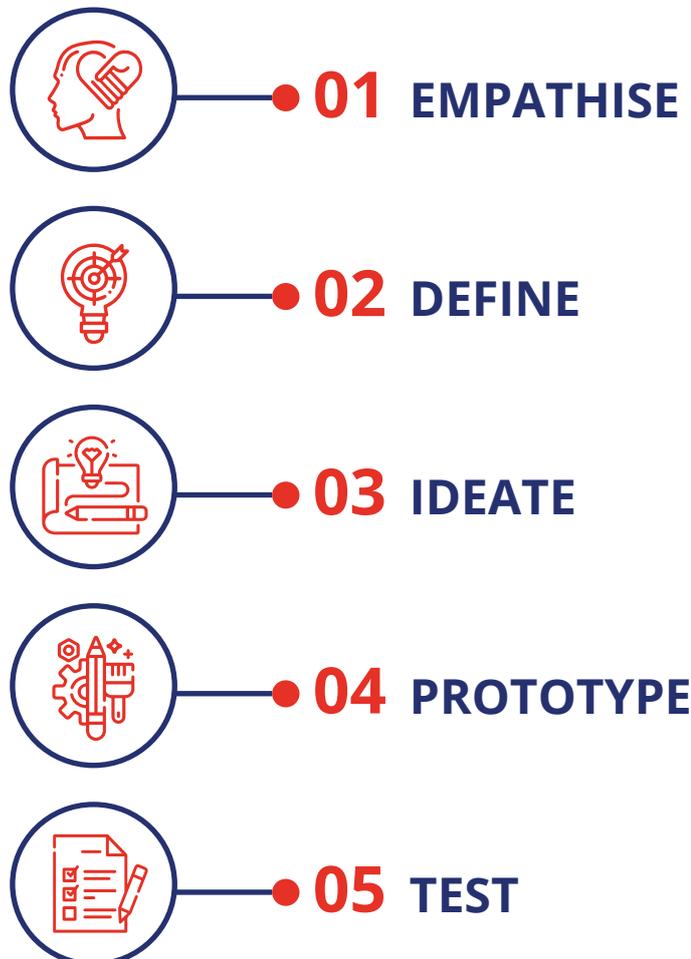
Design thinking complements the approach of HCD, since in the end, we want to create solutions and offer resources that are user friendly and based on the experiences of our target group.

## 1.6 THE DESIGN THINKING PROCESS

The initial design thinking idea was developed in the context of product design and marketing.

So, even if project managers in EU funded projects may not find the design thinking process, framework and resource “ideal”, it is still well worth knowing the concept! Applying Design thinking principles in your project will support you in trying out new things and to organise cooperation in your project team differently.

**THE DESIGN THINKING PROCESS INCLUDES THE FOLLOWING FIVE STAGES:**



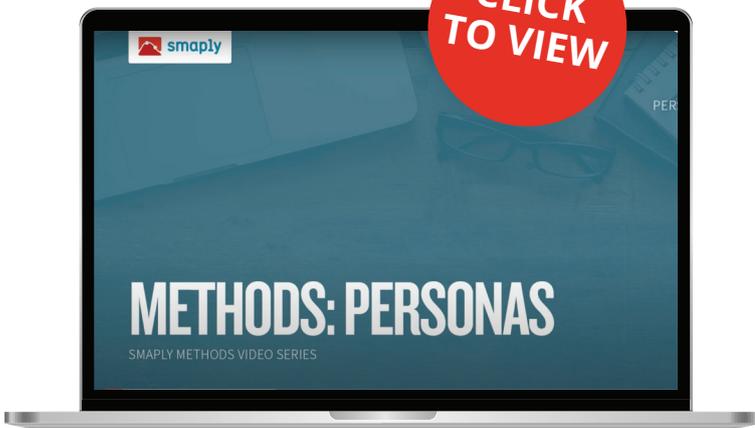
## 01 EMPATHISE



Wear your user's shoes! It is important to gain an empathetic understanding of the problem you are trying to solve, typically through user research. This means to engage those people your project

addresses. Use interviews, focus groups or other tools to experience the perspective of your target group. ([Read more in Part 1.2. "What is Empathy".](#))

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## 02 DEFINE

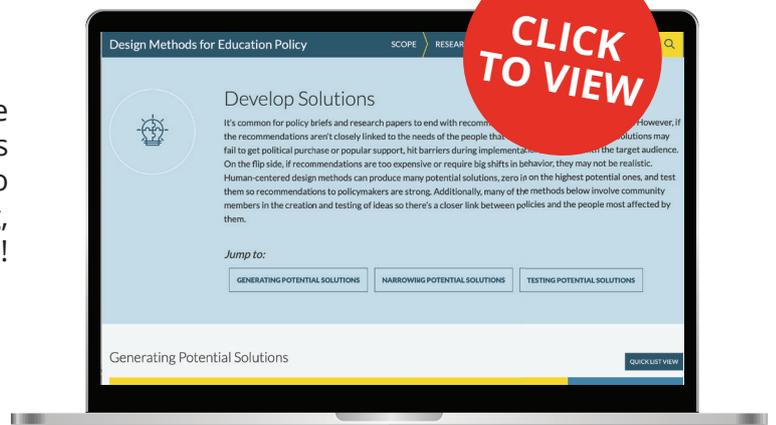
State Your Users' Needs and Problems. The conclusions from your interviews, focus groups or any other sources lead you to the core problems you and your team have identified. Creating Personas can help you to support your efforts human-centered before proceeding to ideation. User personas are stories about imagined ideal users of your offer. Personas represent real, living and breathing people who will engage with your product and your project.

## 03 IDEATE



After the first two stages you can start to move from identifying problems to exploring solutions for your users. This is the point where you start to develop ideas in your project team. Brainstorming, Brainwriting is particularly useful here!

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## 04 PROTOTYPING

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TO VIEW



This is an experimental phase. The aim is to identify the best possible solution for each problem found. A **prototype** can be anything that takes a physical form: a wall of post-its, a video, a paper object. Prototyping deepens your understanding of users and the design of your offer. Create prototypes to test and refine solutions

## 05 TEST



Testing is your chance to gather feedback, refine solutions and continue to learn about your users. In EU-projects the piloting of your developed project outcomes usually is the testing phase.

Testing (or piloting) can give you some unexpected insights, it can reveal that you might not have found the correct solution for your target group. So, you can return to previous stages to make further refinements to find an alternative solution.

### LEARNING BOX

**Have you ever thought of using design thinking in your process of developing a project application?** Or as inspiration to create a new learning offer for your target group? Using different creative techniques will bring in different perspectives into the development process and can also help you to identify challenging aspects for the realisation of your project at an early stage!

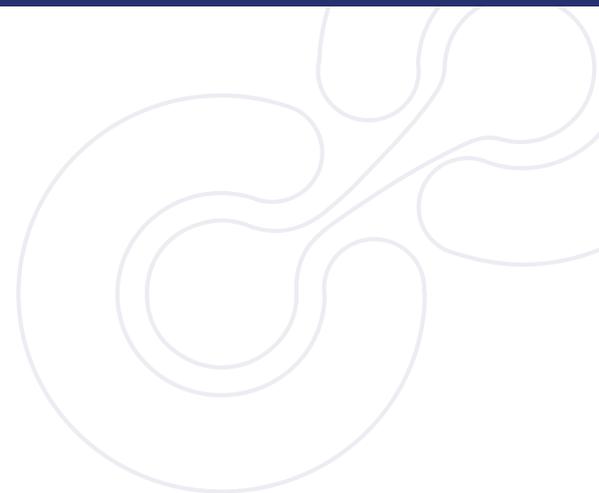


## 1.7 LEARNING FROM ARTISTS AND CREATIVE PROFESSIONALS

Working human-centered means involving many people from different professional backgrounds – to get their perspectives and to consider them in the development of a product. On the one hand we have the structured environment of Project Management, regulated by schedules, budgets and guidelines and on the other hand the flexible, unconventional - often almost chaotic - scene of creatives and artists. But we don't want to serve

clichés! For a long time now, artists and creative professionals have needed project management know-how in order to survive professionally.

The fact is, that coming from different backgrounds we can always learn and benefit from each other - and this is what we want to implement in Creative Change: Listen to success stories from other projects, learning new creative techniques, trying out new concepts and also encourage our project partners to think out of the box. In this way Human Centered Design is applied by actively involving potential users to foster mutual learning and the exchange of experiences.



### LEARNING BOX

**Do you want to get more inspiration from arts or culture?**

Visit our **Creative Change Space** to explore some interesting arts and cultural projects!



# 02

## WHAT IS EMPATHY AND WHY IT IS ESSENTIAL IN HCD?



Applying **empathy in your project implies connecting with behaviors and emotions** and can therefore be seen as being subjective and a more challenging step than other more logical steps of the HCD process.

By understanding the concept, the methods and the tools that can be used to make the empathy phase more explicit and measurable, you will be able to master this crucial aspect of the HCD approach.

## 2.1 DEFINITION

Empathy is the ability to put yourself in other people's shoes by putting aside your own assumptions and preconceived ideas, and by seeing, feeling, and experiencing through the other's perspective. Empathy allows you to understand the other's ideas, thoughts, needs, and problems, and gives you a better appreciation of the other's behavior, therefore it is described in IDEO's Human-Centered Design Toolkit, as a...

*"deep understanding of the problems & realities of the people you are designing for".*

## 2.2 EMPATHY IN HCD

In Human-Centered Design, the "empathise stage" is the first phase, as it involves learning about people's environment, about their roles and interactions within that environment, and the impact it has on their lives. This phase differs from traditional marketing research, which is

more focused on facts and data. In the HCD methodology, empathy concerns the motivations and feelings of the users, which are essential parameters to grasp in order to connect with the users and adapt your approach to better suit the users' needs.

## 2.3 IMPORTANCE OF EMPATHY IN ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMMES AND IN PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Your goal as a designer or manager of projects, programmes and products, is to design something that actually fits the users' needs. The HCD approach suggests moving away from the concept of "one size fits all" of mass productivity that designs based on criteria of the average users and therefore removing the human identity aspect, to designing for all users considering personal variations and needs.

That is why the "empathise stage" is a key step to design thinking. In this stage, your goal, as a designer, is to gain an empathic understanding of the people you are designing for, which will guide you to design solutions that meet the three parameters: desirability, feasibility, and viability.

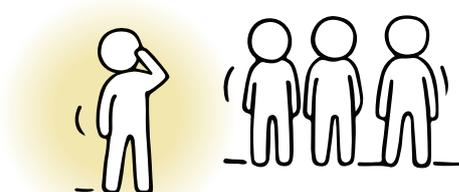
## 2.4 HOW TO APPLY EMPATHY IN YOUR PROJECT?

First, it is important to know that empathy is an ability that everyone can apply in daily and professional life, humans being social creatures by nature.

### But how exactly can it be applied in your project?

The empathy process involves observing the users you want to design for, engaging with them, and immersing yourself in their physical and emotional environment.

## OBSERVATION



The **OBSERVATION PHASE** is a good starting point to get away from your own assumptions and get into the users' perspectives. The what-how-why framework can guide you with translating your observations

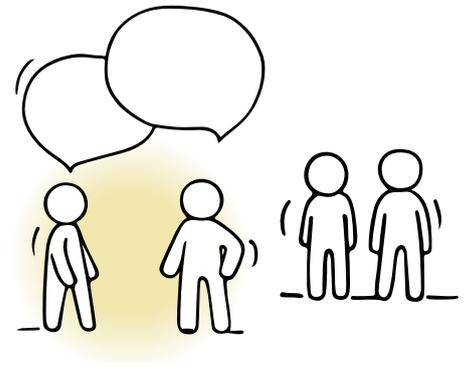
- 01 THE WHAT?** refers to the details of what has happened: for example, the user took the following actions when coordinating a partner meeting online.
- 02 THE HOW?** Refers to how the user has completed these actions. What were their facial expressions? Were they exerting a lot of effort? Did they seem at ease, frustrated, or confused?
- 03 THE WHY?** refers to your interpretation of the users' behavior.

## ENGAGING

The **ENGAGING PHASE** is necessary to get deeper insights on the users' experience and to confront your observations made in the first phase. There is no better way to know about the users than to directly interact with them. Some of the questions to consider asking the users are:

- 01** What was the reason for you to make use of this tool, approach, and method?
- 02** How did you feel while implementing this idea?
- 03** Why did you feel this way?

Having gained precious information on the users' experience, you should have a better understanding of their feelings, thoughts, and needs. However, to fully appreciate the reasons that would create or justify your users' feedback, you need to immerse yourself in their environment.



## IMMERSION

In the **IMMERSION PHASE**, you can observe the users in a more realistic context and surround yourself within their surrounding reality, which therefore, becomes your reality.

It is when you have experienced the intangible needs and feelings of the users and developed the same thinking process. Ultimately, your empathic research should reveal the deeper needs and root causes, which, if addressed correctly, may be integrated profoundly in the project you're designing.





There are also plenty of **EMPATHY-BUILDING TOOLS** that are used in design thinking that can help you to apply empathy in your own project.

- Interviews, surveys, and questionnaires are good ways to be in direct contact with your users and ask them the questions you need answers to.
- Empathy maps address what a user says, thinks, does, and feels. The map gives an overview of who the user is.
- Storyboards help you to retrace the journey of the user through their own words and photos.
- Focus groups where you can engage with a group of users and confront each of their experiences.
- Journey maps is a synthetic representation that describes step-by-step how a user interacts with a service. The process is mapped from the user perspective, describing what happens at each stage of the interaction, what touchpoints are involved and what obstacles or barriers they may encounter.

### LEARNING BOX

Some excellent tools can be found in the toolkit of [www.servicedesigntools.org](http://www.servicedesigntools.org).



In the Creative Change project, in order to develop outputs and design a guide that is truly useful to you, we applied the HCD methodology through several processes. The first phase of the project consisted in getting to know you, your environment, and your needs better.

For this, we conducted research on a multicultural scale, surveyed project managers, designers, artists, and creatives all over Europe, and organised an international focus group session in which we shared experiences and personal stories. If you were part of any of these activities, we thank you again, as your contribution is helping to design a project for change.



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