



Artificial Intelligence
for a New Design Education
Approach

DELIVERABLE 2.3

Participatory Analysis Report

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Executive Summary

This Participatory Analysis Report records what design teachers, design students and industry practitioners said about artificial intelligence in design education when they were brought together to discuss it. It was produced as part of [AIDEA](#), a higher education cooperation partnership funded by the Erasmus+ programme, which works on how AI can be brought into design curricula in a way that answers what the labour market expects while keeping human creativity at the centre of design work. The purpose of the report is to anchor what the project develops next in what those stakeholders described rather than in assumptions about what design education needs.

The evidence

The evidence is a series of national focus group activities conducted in six European countries between April and July 2026, together with material gathered at a Pan-European conference on digital education held online in May 2026. The findings from the focus groups are organised into fourteen themes in four clusters, covering how AI is currently used, what participants held to be at risk, the conditions and constraints on integration, and what they said design education needs. The stakeholder groups met in a single session in most countries, while in Slovenia, the focus group was organised in separate sessions.

The conference material is reported separately and then set against what the focus groups produced, since it was generated by education professionals across a range of disciplines rather than from design specifically, and it provides a record of practice.

How AI is being used

AI is already part of everyday study and professional practice, and in most discussions the clearest value was located in the early stages of design work. Participants everywhere described generating and comparing draft options as the most common use, alongside research and information handling and, in most discussions, production and presentation work. One group's reflection were centred on the kind of work being done rather than on the development phase it had reached, which suggests that where AI is useful may depend on the shape of the work rather than on a general property of the design process.

The benefit named most consistently was the automation of repetitive and time-consuming tasks, with time released from routine work becoming time available for creative or strategic work. Different stakeholder groups valued different returns. Students described AI as a learning aid, teachers pointed to preparation and administration, and industry participants emphasised workflow speed and getting a first concept in front of a client quickly. Some teachers were careful not to treat time saved as a good in itself, holding that it counts only if it is reinvested in mentoring and critical dialogue.

Points of agreement

Three positions were held in every focus group discussion:

- AI output cannot be used as it arrives and has to be checked against knowledge the system does not hold.
- Habitual use erodes the capability of the person using it, a concern raised by students about themselves and not only by teachers about students.
- Certain decisions must remain with a person, whether the emphasis fell on authorship of the final decision, on accountability for it, or on the qualities participants held AI cannot supply.

Participants also agreed that the competence people lack is not familiarity with the tools. They located it in judgement, in the critical evaluation of outputs, and in understanding enough of how the systems work to know where they fail. Where they set out what equips a person to judge an output, the answer given most often was design knowledge acquired through making, and the tests they described are tests of design rather than of the tool: whether a chair stands, whether a garment can be constructed, whether a building meets regulation and climate. Participants named a third capability alongside these, judgement about meaning, cultural context and emotional resonance.

The capability at stake

One consequence runs through the findings. The capability participants relied on to judge AI output is the same capability they described as eroding under habitual use. Formal responsibility for an output is not by itself a safeguard, since a person answerable for work they cannot test is accountable in name only. Craft and material knowledge appear here as the instrument by which output is tested rather than as something merely to be preserved alongside AI. In this sense, an educational programme that frames AI integration as mere technical training, centred on teaching students to operate the tools, addresses an entirely different set of issues than the difficulty participants described.

Alongside this, participants in several discussions were concerned that AI-generated work tends towards sameness, on the grounds that these systems draw on existing material and therefore reproduce it, with the risk that uniform output comes in time to be accepted as the standard.

Implications for teaching

The widely held position is that AI belongs inside existing design teaching rather than in a subject of its own, integrated into courses and learning outcomes rather than left to individual lecturers. Where participants addressed how these competences should be developed, the argument was for practice rather than instruction, through hands-on work, interdisciplinary projects and real briefs with real constraints.

Assessment was described as a practice AI has made unreliable, because a finished output no longer shows what a student can do, and the response proposed was to assess the process rather than the artefact. That response depends on contact time and individual judgement which the same discussions describe as scarce.

Open acknowledgement of AI use was treated as the condition on which teaching or assessing that use depends at all, and one discussion recorded participants who were initially unwilling to acknowledge how much they rely on it.

Conditions for integration

Four conditions were asked for consistently, and they are institutional rather than individual:

- Access to the tools, where the useful capability sits behind subscriptions.
- Secure infrastructure in which students can experiment without exposing data or intellectual property.
- A stated institutional position on what acceptable use is.
- Continuing professional development for teachers, rather than single training events, and teacher preparation was described as a shortfall wherever institutional capacity was discussed.

Cost was raised as a practical barrier in most discussions and in one as the largest single obstacle to integration, connected in each case to unequal access between students, between institutions, and between those who can pay for the better tools and those who cannot. Access also runs the other way. Most discussions held that AI widens access to knowledge and lowers the barrier of technical skill for people without formal training, so any position on access has to hold both. Uncertainty about who owns AI-assisted work, and about whether existing law answers the question, was widely raised and nowhere resolved.

Where the evidence divides

Two questions divide the evidence, and both bear directly on what a design programme does. Participants were split on whether AI raises or lowers the standing of design expertise, some describing commodification and downward pressure on quality from clients, others describing human judgement and manual skill becoming more valuable rather than less. When AI should enter a course of study is contested in the same way, and the positions taken imply different programmes rather than different emphases.

Prompting divides the discussions more narrowly. Most focus groups treated it as a skill to be taught, two held that prompting skill on its own is not sufficient, and one doubted that it will remain a skill at all.

What the evidence does not establish

Three topics are thin rather than contested. Representational bias was discussed at length in only one focus group. The effect of AI on design employment was raised but not developed in detail. Environmental impact appears in contradictory forms and is developed in neither direction.

The largest absence in the focus groups is practice. Participants described what they expect, value and fear, and no focus group produced an account of AI teaching in design education that had been carried out and observed.

The conference material

The conference material supplies what the focus groups could not. Its poster contributions show teachers building the evaluation of outputs into the task itself, teaching students to account for what in a piece of work is their own, and adapting materials for learners with reading difficulties, speech delays and other learning barriers, which is a form of inclusion the design discussions do not reach. That material comes from school-level teaching across a range of disciplines, so the practices carry over more readily than the content. It is silent on cost and access, and it treats authorship only as a question of academic integrity.

Limits on the evidence

The focus groups were small by design, and the conference contributions were voluntary, so nothing in this report is representative of design education or of the design sector in any country. The comparison is between six discussions about AI in design rather than between six national education systems. Section 2.6 sets the limits out in full.

These findings pass to two further outputs of the project, a manifesto setting out guiding principles for AI in design education and a handbook of teaching tools and methodologies for teachers, as a record of what design teachers, design students and industry practitioners said in 2026. They support statements about what participants hold, and about where the discussions agree and where they do not. They do not support claims about design education across Europe.

1 Introduction

This report sets out the findings of a participatory analysis of artificial intelligence in design education. It draws on two bodies of evidence gathered in 2026. The first is a series of focus groups held in six European countries between April and July, each bringing together design teachers, design students and industry practitioners to discuss AI in their own work and study. The second is material gathered at a Pan-European conference on digital education held online in May, which brought together education professionals from a range of disciplines. Participants gave their views on AI in education through a short online survey (Mentimeter), and teachers contributed examples of AI already in use in their own teaching to an online poster board (Padlet).

This Participatory Analysis Report was developed as part of the [Artificial Intelligence for a new Design Education Approach \(AIDEA\)](#) project, a cooperation partnership in higher education funded by the Erasmus+ programme and running from December 2025 to August 2028. The project works on how AI can be brought into design curricula in a way that answers what the labour market now expects while keeping human creativity at the centre of design work. Eight organisations in six countries take part:

- **Italy:** Accademia Italiana Moda e Design and the Centro Italiano per l'Apprendimento Permanente (CIAPE)
- **Slovenia:** The Faculty of Design and STEP Institut
- **The Netherlands:** Wittenborg University of Applied Sciences
- **Austria:** Know Center Research GmbH
- **North Macedonia:** Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje
- **Ireland:** Technological University of the Shannon

The project's conceptual framework of integrating AI into design education rests on three "Intelligences". The **Intelligence of the Hand** is craftsmanship and material-based creativity. **Artificial Intelligence** is the set of digital tools used for ideation, automation and efficiency. **Social Intelligence** is the ethical and human-centred side of design, covering inclusion, sustainability and the consequences a design decision carries for the people it affects. The framework is the project's starting point rather than a category derived from this evidence. The findings in Section 3 are organised by what participants discussed, and the relationship between those findings and the three intelligences is set out in Section 7.9.

The report sets out what participants said, organised by subject, and it compares the six focus group discussions with one another. The conference material is reported separately and then set against what the focus groups produced. The focus groups were small by design, and the conference contributions were voluntary, so nothing here is offered as representative of design education or of the design sector in any country. Section 2.6 sets out the limits on the evidence in full, and those limits bear on every finding that follows.

The findings feed two further outputs of the project: a manifesto setting out guiding principles for AI in design education, and a handbook of teaching tools and methodologies for teachers.

They are inputs to those documents rather than instructions for them. Section 7 sets out what this evidence implies for each.

Section 2 describes how the focus groups and the conference were run, how the material was analysed, and what the evidence can bear. Section 3 sets out the findings in four clusters containing fourteen themes. Section 4 gives a short account of each of the six national focus group discussions in turn. Section 5 covers the evidence collected through the conference. Section 6 compares the six countries. Section 7 draws out the implications for design education and for the project's later work, and Section 8 concludes.

2 Methodology

This report draws on two bodies of participatory evidence. The first is a series of focus groups held in six European countries between April and July 2026. The second is an online Pan-European conference on digital education held in May 2026.

2.1 Focus groups

The focus groups followed a common methodological design, prepared by the Technological University of the Shannon in Ireland and applied by the organisation responsible for delivery in each country. This ensured that every session covered the same thematic areas and produced insights that could be read against one another.

Each national focus-group exercise included representatives of three stakeholder groups: design students, teachers and industry practitioners. In most countries they participated in a joint session, while in Slovenia the three stakeholder groups were convened separately. Every country was asked to recruit at least three participants from each group, nine in total, with a reduced target of six for Austria.

Sessions were planned to last approximately two hours and to work through five thematic areas. The same five areas then served as the structure for reporting, so each discussion and the document describing it share one shape:

- **Current perceptions:** How AI is viewed in the design sector, whether as a tool, a threat or a collaborator, and how it is currently used.
- **Opportunities and value:** Where AI adds value in the design process, and at which stage.
- **Challenges and barriers:** What challenges AI integration poses to the design profession, and the technical, financial and educational obstacles to adopting it.
- **Ethical and social implications:** Ethical concerns, the place of traditional skills, legal questions, and social effects including accessibility, cultural bias and environmental impact.

- **Educational needs and requirements:** The skills currently missing, the knowledge required, how those skills should be taught, and the infrastructure needed to teach them.

Each organisation chose how to capture its discussion, and each was asked to produce a National Insights Report in English on a common template. The template asked for an account of who took part and how the session was run, a summary of the discussion under each of the five areas above, and a short conclusion. It allowed roughly twice as much space for ethical and social implications and for educational needs as for the other three areas.

The findings in Section 3 are not organised under these five headings. The reason is set out at the start of that section: the same concern was recorded under different headings in different countries, so the heading a point sits under is not a reliable guide to what the point is about. The five areas remain the structure of the sessions and of the national reports, and Section 3 explains where the material from each one has been placed.

2.2 Focus group implementation

The methodology allowed a degree of flexibility in delivery of the focus groups. Participants included students and academic staff, so sessions had to fit around teaching and assessment during the academic term. Countries could therefore hold their session in person or online, whichever made attendance possible. Most sessions were held in person, with online delivery used where that suited the participants and the setting. All focus groups were held between April and July 2026.

In most countries the three stakeholder groups met together in a single session, so that students, teachers and industry representatives took part in the same conversation. In one country (Slovenia) the groups were convened separately, each session bringing together a single stakeholder group.

Some organisations combined the discussion with a practical component, in which participants worked with AI tools directly, were given presentations on the use of AI in design or examined AI-generated design material as part of the activity. This went beyond the common design and was added where partners judged it useful. Elsewhere the session consisted of the focus group discussion alone.

Methods of capturing the discussion also varied, as the design allowed. In some sessions participants wrote their thoughts down individually before opening them up to the group, and key points were recorded on flipcharts. In others the discussion was audio recorded with participants' agreement and transcribed afterwards or captured in notes taken by facilitators during open discussion. The organiser of each focus group compiled the information collected into a National Insights Report. This resulted in six national reports which, alongside the insights gathered from the online Pan-European conference, form the evidence base for this report.

2.3 Focus group participants

Table 1 below sets out who took part in each country.

Table 1 Focus Group Participants per Country

Country	Organiser	Date	Format	Students	Teachers	Industry	Total Participants	Design Fields Represented
Austria	KC	20 th May	In-person (Focus Group + AI Tutorial)	2	2	3	7	UX Design, Architecture, Digital Design & Marketing
Italy	AI	17 th June	In-person	3	3	3	9	Fashion Design & Management, Interior Design, Product decide, Art Direction, Copywriting/Advertising, AI Fashion Design Consultancy
Ireland	TUS	18 th May	In-person (Focus Group + AI Workshop)	3	4	4	11	Fashion/Textile Design, Graphic Design, Product Design, Engineering Design
North Macedonia	UKIM	16 th July	In-person (Focus Group + Presentations on AI in Design)	3	3	3	9	Interior Design, Furniture production, visual communication, graphic design, photography and multimedia
Slovenia	FD	Between 4 th of June and 9 th of July	Online – separate sessions with each stakeholder group	4	3	3	10	Interior Design, Design Management, Visual Communication
The Netherlands	WUAS	30 th April	In-person (Focus Group + Workshop)	3	6	3	12	Product Design, Software Design, Business & Operations

2.4 The Pan-European Conference

The second body of evidence is different in kind. The Pan-European Conference on Digital Education was a 90-minute online event held on 28 May 2026 and organised by one of the project partners, the STEP Institut in Slovenia. It served two purposes at once. It was a public event at which the project shared its work with education professionals, and it was a means of gathering input from a much wider group of people than the national focus groups could reach.

Participation was arranged through a registration form, and people could either follow the event live or watch the recording afterwards on Facebook or YouTube. Registrations came from 54 countries. The event was framed as European, but the registration data shows that its reach extended well beyond Europe, into Africa, Asia, the Middle East and the Americas. The recording has since accumulated more than 9,000 views across the two platforms.

Input was collected through two online tools. The first was **Mentimeter**, a live polling tool that gathers short written answers from an audience and displays them back on screen as they arrive. Participants were invited to respond before and during the conference to three prompts, covering what they expected AI to help them with, what they took from the session, and what concerned them about AI. Twenty responses were received.

The second was **Padlet**, an online noticeboard on which contributors post text, images and links to a shared page that everyone can read. Teachers and lecturers were invited by email in late April to contribute to an online poster session, roughly a month before the conference itself, and submissions remained open until the end of May. Contributors were asked to describe a teaching practice that used AI, either in preparing lessons or in working with students, and to submit in English. A total of 126 contributions were received, of which 53 were assessed as meeting the poster-session criteria.

Those who took part were education professionals from a range of disciplines, not only design. Section 5 sets out what the conference contributed and the limits on how that contribution can be used. The conference materials remain available online. The poster-session contributions can be read on the Padlet board at <https://padlet.com/PrimeraCourses/AIDEA>. The presentations were not part of the participatory research, so they are not included in the analysis.

2.5 Analysis and verification

The evidence base for this report is seven documents: the six national reports and the report of the Pan-European Conference. The analysis works only with what those documents record.

Material was grouped by what it concerns rather than under the five reporting headings (as described in Section 2.1). Where a point sits in a report shows how that discussion moved, not what the point is about. Points relevant to more than one area came up again as the discussion reached them, so the same point appears once in one report and three times in another. Section 3 sets out that reasoning and explains where the material from each of the five areas has been placed. The grouping produced fourteen themes in four clusters.

A traceability record was built alongside the findings in Section 3. It holds one entry for each point in that section, recording the report the point came from, the country, the heading it sat under, and the basis on which it is reported here. Of 352 entries, 310 record something participants said, 19 record a partner's own analysis of their material rather than participant speech, 14 record an inference made in preparing this report, 7 record an absence, 1 records content from a presentation put to a group, and 1 an observation about how a session ran. The record covers the findings in Section 3 and is held by the Technological University of the Shannon as a working document.

The analysis was carried out with the support of an AI assistant, used to locate and extract relevant passages from the seven documents, to organise them into themes, to draft text, and to build the traceability record. No material in this report is drawn from outside those seven documents.

All seven documents were read in full by the author of this report, and the notes taken in that reading were kept separately from the analysis. Each drafted section was verified against those notes and against the reports themselves. Statements about how widely a point was made, and about where in the evidence it appears, were checked individually against the reports rather than against the draft. The full report was reviewed by all project partners, and each partner verified the passages drawn from its own national focus group.

2.6 Limitations of the evidence

The focus groups and the conference were not designed to produce a representative picture of design education in Europe. They were designed to bring the people this project concerns, design teachers, design students and industry practitioners, into direct discussion of AI in their own work and study, and to record what they said. The value of the evidence lies in its being first-hand, and its purpose is to anchor what the project develops next in what those stakeholders described rather than in assumptions about what they need.

Six limits bear on how the findings should be read:

The comparison is between six discussions about AI in design and not between six national education systems. All six groups worked from the same thematic areas, and the reports record very little about national policy, national industry structure or national curricula. Section 6.4 sets out the few points that are anchored to a particular country.

Focus groups are small by design. Between seven and twelve people took part in each country. What is recorded is what a particular room said, and it is not offered as representative of design education or of the design sector in any country.

The design fields represented differed considerably between countries, so what counted as a typical design problem was not the same in each session. Section 4 gives the fields represented in each country, and this bears on which concerns were raised.

Sessions also differed in how they were run. Some opened the five areas as questions to the group, and others worked through prepared presentations or a practical exercise with discussion following each part. What is put to a room, and how it is put, bears on which topics are reached and how far they are taken. Section 4 describes the format used in each country, and Section 6.3 identifies the differences that are better explained by session design than by the country in which the session was held.

The reports differ in how much detail they record. The reporting template set an indicative length for each of the five areas, and the reports vary in how closely they follow it. Some set out a discussion at length, including what individual participants said and the points on which a group divided. Others summarise an area in a few lines and record the position a group reached rather than the exchange that produced it. A point developed over a paragraph in one report may appear in another as a single statement, and within a single report some areas are treated far more fully than others. Comparison is drawn only where the material exists in the source, and the coverage table in Section 6 records theme by theme what each report carries and how far it takes it. A topic may have been discussed in a session and not written up, so absence from a report is not evidence that participants did not raise it or did not consider it important.

The sessions asked participants what they perceive, value, need and fear. They did not ask what participants have implemented and evaluated. The findings are therefore evidence of expectation, concern and stated need rather than of tested practice. The one body of evidence in this report that records practice is the set of poster contributions to the Pan-European Conference, which came from education professionals across disciplines rather than from design specifically and which are voluntary contributions rather than a representative sample. Section 5 sets out what that material can and cannot support.

3 Findings

This section sets out what participants said, organised into four clusters containing fourteen themes. The clusters are how AI is currently used, what participants identified as at risk, the conditions and constraints on integration, and what participants said design education needs.

To reiterate, these themes are not the five thematic areas the sessions were built around. Every session worked through the same five areas, and every national report is written under those headings, but a discussion does not stay inside a heading. A concern raised in one area came back when the discussion reached another, so the same concern is recorded under different headings in different countries, and often under more than one heading in the same country. Organising this report by the five areas would therefore have grouped material by the point in a session at which it happened to be raised, rather than by what participants were talking about.

All five areas are accounted for in what follows. Material recorded under current perceptions and under opportunities and value sits mainly in 3.1. Material recorded under challenges and barriers is distributed across 3.1.2, 3.2 and 3.3, because participants raised obstacles of several different kinds under that heading. Material recorded under ethical and social implications sits mainly in 3.2 and 3.3, and also in 3.1.3, where participants set out which decisions they held must remain with a person. Material recorded under educational needs sits mainly in 3.4, with the infrastructure and licensing part of it in 3.3.1.

Findings are attributed to the focus groups and the participants who took part in them, and to the countries in which those groups were held. Individual participants are not named. Three kinds of statement are attributed to the national reports instead, because the claim is about the document rather than about the discussion: statements that a topic is absent, since a topic may have been discussed and not written up; a partner's own analysis of what its participants said; and statements that a point was recorded without elaboration.

3.1 How AI is being used

3.1.1 Where the value sits

Five of the six national focus groups located the clearest value of AI in the early stages of design work. Participants in Ireland, Slovenia, Italy, Austria and the Netherlands described AI as most useful before a direction has been fixed. In Slovenia the greatest potential was placed in the early and analytical stages, in Italy in the early and intermediate phases, and in Austria in the early phases, where an architecture participant described AI as "super for pre-design and prototyping, but afterwards expert knowledge is necessary". Participants in Slovenia, Austria and Italy went further and described the usefulness of AI as falling away as a project moves towards resolution.

North Macedonian participants answered the question differently. Rather than locating value at a single stage, they distinguished by the kind of work being done. The beginning of a project was given for content creators, photographers and visual effects work; the middle for architects, once project consulting is complete; and for students, any stage of a project was considered a reasonable point at which to use AI. The disagreement is worth holding, because it suggests that where AI is useful may depend on the shape of the work rather than on a general property of the design process.

The tasks participants named fall into three groups. The first is research and information handling: archival and market research, trend identification, gathering and structuring information, and analysing literature, raised in Slovenia, Italy and the Netherlands. The second is generating and comparing options: brainstorming, idea generation, concept exploration, mock-ups, initial sketches, colour directions and layout variations, raised in all six countries. The third is production and presentation work: rapid prototyping, moving from two-dimensional concepts to three-dimensional ones, documentation, presentation preparation, coding, photography editing and photo retouching, raised in Ireland, Slovenia, Italy, the Netherlands and North Macedonia. The Austrian discussion concentrated on the first two groups, and its examples are specific to architecture and UI/UX. That specificity is plausibly an effect of the session format, which included a tutorial in which participants evaluated AI-generated concepts from those two disciplinary positions. Automation of repetitive and time-consuming work was the most consistently named benefit, raised in every country. Participants in Ireland, Slovenia, the Netherlands and North Macedonia described this in the same terms: time released from routine tasks becomes time available for creative or strategic work.

Stakeholder groups emphasised different returns. Students in Slovenia and Austria valued AI as a learning aid that explains unfamiliar material and supports self-directed study. Teachers in Slovenia, the Netherlands and Italy pointed to preparation and administrative work, including course materials, programme structure and routine tasks. Industry participants in Slovenia, the Netherlands, Austria and North Macedonia emphasised workflow speed, productivity and getting a first concept in front of a client or colleague quickly. An Italian industry participant described being able to present advertising video concepts to clients in ways that were previously impossible or too expensive. North Macedonian industry participants framed the gain as running in both directions, with the designer saving time and the client receiving a better result sooner. Among the same group, participants not yet using AI said they intended to start, naming interior project presentation and three-dimensional visualisation as where they would begin.

The tools participants named were general-purpose assistants and image generators in most countries, alongside sector-specific software in Ireland. North Macedonian students said they knew that tools built for designers exist but were not well informed about them and used AI mainly for information and text.

Some observations appear in one country only. In Italy, a student described AI as a continuity device across the life of a project, a briefing space where ideas, reflections and feedback accumulate. In Ireland, participants identified environmental benefit as a value, citing digital garment development and textile CAD software as ways of reducing fabric waste and the cost of sampling and prototyping. That framing is not repeated elsewhere.

Slovenian participants raised the energy consumption of large AI models as a concern running the other way, and North Macedonian participants raised environmental concern in local terms, pointing to recurring public protests over the construction of data centres and over water pollution.

Participants in two countries qualified the value they described. Dutch teachers were careful not to present time saved as a good in itself, holding that it counts only if it is reinvested in mentoring, critical dialogue and human interaction. An Italian teacher found AI useful for building the structure of a course programme or a complex project, and distinguished this from creative invention, where the output remained far from the intended result.

Personalised learning came up as a distinct educational opportunity in two countries. Slovenian academic staff pointed to AI's potential to personalise learning experiences and support independent inquiry. Dutch participants described adaptive feedback, individual learning pathways and faster access to information, and suggested these may matter most in diverse student groups.

3.1.2 The verification burden

Participants in all six countries described AI output as something that cannot be used as it arrives. It has to be checked, and the checking calls on knowledge the tool does not have. This was reported as a present condition of working with AI rather than as an expectation about the future.

The most concrete account came from Austria, where the session included a tutorial in which participants evaluated AI-generated concepts from their own disciplinary positions. Architecture participants found that generated designs disregarded local building law, climate conditions, material suitability and safety requirements including fall protection. UI/UX participants found concepts that lacked functionality and meaningful interaction design, with one describing a whole concept as wrong and making little sense, and another observing that the accompanying text said almost nothing and bore little connection to the image. Contextual information that would have been necessary to judge the design, such as its intended purpose, was often missing. The Austrian conclusion was that expert review remains essential because AI lacks a working understanding of real-world constraints. That level of specificity is plausibly an effect of the tutorial, which put participants in front of actual outputs to assess. It should not be read as evidence that these constraints are peculiar to Austria or that participants elsewhere were less alert to them.

Elsewhere the failures reported were less discipline-specific, but the conclusion was the same. Irish participants described mistakes that are easy to miss and inconsistent output quality, sometimes convincingly realistic and sometimes obviously artificial, with anatomical errors in human figures given as a recurring example. Dutch industry participants described an internally built assistant that generates customer emails, and the practice that had grown around it of checking every message, because errors in pricing or customer details remained possible. Dutch teachers made the same point about information: material may look convincing and still require verification before it can be relied on.

One Dutch educator described reviewing research proposals containing references that do not exist. Slovenian industry representatives held that AI output requires human verification, professional expertise and responsible decision-making, and Slovenian participants across groups identified the ability to recognise inaccurate information, invented content, algorithmic bias and unreliable recommendations as a competence designers need. One Slovenian participant put it as knowing when not to trust it.

Two accounts locate the problem in what AI produces rather than in whether it is correct. North Macedonian participants held that machines generate options while human judgement is required to filter them, navigate ambiguity and make strategic trade-offs, and that current models recombine existing information rather than originate. In the same session a presentation argued that excessive idealisation to the point of unreality can detach a design from its purpose of serving people, though this was an argument put to the group rather than a finding drawn from discussion. Italian participants described AI as a system of re-elaboration and named its limits in terms of innovation, with one student using AI to find sources and mock-up directions while checking the sources and reworking the outputs.

Participants in two countries said the checking can consume the time the tool was supposed to release. Irish participants stated it directly, that time spent verifying and correcting can outweigh time saved. A Dutch industry participant said they did not know whether the tool saved time or added to it. Two Irish observations concern the usability of output rather than its accuracy. AI-generated images arrive without editable layers, which makes them hard to adapt. AI can also take a project in an unintended direction, producing results that are off-brief or too broad, which is a problem of control rather than of correctness. Dutch participants also described the absence of structured guidance, learning through trial and error, colleagues and online communities rather than formal training, with one remarking that they were in the dark about how these systems work.

Who carries the burden differed by group in the reports that separate them. Dutch industry participants placed more emphasis on checking and supervision than students did, and the report links this to organisational use raising questions of reliability and control. Austrian students and academic participants discussed AI in relation to learning and assessment more than output validation. Italian teachers described a version of the burden that falls on them rather than on the designer: where a student submits AI-generated research or renderings, the teacher has to establish whether the task was analysed or outsourced, and the report notes that a teacher's authority may be challenged when students present AI output as automatically correct.

Two responses to the burden appear, and they are treated at length elsewhere in this report. One is prompting, with Austrian participants holding that output quality depends heavily on the quality and specificity of prompts, and one participant suggesting that the system should ask follow-up questions where information is unclear. What prompting can and cannot resolve is contested and is discussed in 3.4.1. The other is design knowledge itself, the argument that traditional skill is what allows an output to be tested against material, cultural and social reality, which is the subject of 3.4.3.

3.1.3 Human oversight and decision authority

Participants in all six countries held that certain decisions must remain with a person. This is a different claim from the one in 3.1.2, which concerns whether an output is correct. It concerns who decides and who is answerable. The two run together in the discussions and are separated here. Maintaining the human role was among the questions put to every group, so the level of agreement across the six should be read with that in mind.

On where authority sits, participants located it at the points where direction is set. Irish participants held that humans need to remain in control of the creative process, particularly at the start when the concept is developed and at the end when final decisions are made, and the same discussion also held that oversight is needed throughout a project and not only at those two points. Slovenian participants held that the designer should always remain the author of the final decision, and that AI can generate options while meaning and responsibility remain human. Italian participants took the strongest shared position in their session to be that AI is a support tool and not a substitute for human judgement, experience and expression, with the condition that the designer remains responsible for the final direction. Dutch participants held that final judgement depends on human experience, context, taste and an understanding of what is meaningful for users.

Two countries put the question in terms of answerability rather than authorship. Austrian participants held that responsibility for design decisions, ethical considerations and legal compliance must remain with human professionals rather than with AI systems, and architecture participants raised building regulations, legal standards and safety responsibilities as matters AI cannot reliably address. Dutch participants asked who is accountable if an AI-assisted decision causes harm or an output turns out to be wrong and treated it as unsettled. Their discussion of who owns the resulting work is treated in 3.3.2.

Participants also described what they held AI cannot supply, and the accounts are close to one another. Slovenian participants held that design is a human-centred discipline combining creativity, empathy, cultural understanding and contextual decision-making, and that AI lacks lived experience, emotional understanding and the ability to interpret complex human needs. Austrian participants held that AI lacks contextual understanding, emotional intelligence and practical judgement. North Macedonian participants named emotional resonance as the first of the capacities where human thinking remains irreplaceable, holding that AI lacks intuition, lived experience and genuine empathy, and that humans supply the reasons behind a piece of work along with its cultural context and emotional depth. Irish participants named decisions about brand voice, quality and appropriateness as requiring judgement AI is not able to provide. Dutch participants held that AI makes creativity, craftsmanship, empathy, context and ethical judgement more important rather than less, because someone has to decide what is automated, what is questioned and what stays human.

Two groups proposed a division of labour rather than a boundary. North Macedonian participants held that AI should handle routine and data-heavy tasks while people direct strategic choices, ethical reviews and emotional resonance. Irish students held that the design process itself should remain human with AI used as support along the way.

Two components of this theme are treated separately in this report because they carry arguments of their own. What participants said human judgement consists of, when the question is what allows an output to be tested, is the subject of 3.4.3. The claim that current systems recombine existing material rather than originate, raised in North Macedonia and Italy, is treated in 3.2.2.

3.2 What is at risk

3.2.1 Over-reliance and the erosion of capability

Concern that habitual use of AI weakens the capability of the person using it was raised in all six countries, and by every stakeholder group. It was the most widely shared concern in the evidence base.

The mechanism participants described was consistent. AI is convenient, convenience makes it the default and using it as a default removes the effort through which capability is built. Slovenian participants put it as excessive reliance reducing independent thinking, creativity and critical judgement. Irish participants described designers and students using AI as a first resort, with their own skills and engagement with the work declining over time. Austrian participants held that accepting outputs without critical evaluation weakens independent problem-solving and reduces deeper learning. In the Netherlands the same point was made in blunter terms, with one participant observing that AI is so practical that people are becoming lazy. An Italian teacher compared AI to the calculator: useful, but capable of weakening critical ability where its outputs are accepted passively. One Irish participant raised the possibility that this kind of reliance could tip into something compulsive.

What participants expected to lose varied. Slovenian students spoke about creative confidence and opportunities for experimentation. Irish participants named the satisfaction of having produced something oneself. Slovenian academic staff and Austrian participants both described a shift towards superficial learning, in which students pursue a fast result rather than an understanding of the design process. An Italian participant located the risk at the level of professional identity, fearing that AI inhibits the capacity to ask who one is as a professional and what one wants to say.

Nearly all of this is anticipated rather than observed. Participants were describing what they expect to happen, and the reports record it as concern rather than as evidence of decline. One account is different in kind. A Dutch student described using AI heavily during an internship and afterwards finding that previously held programming knowledge had gone, attributing this to not having used their own thinking to build the code. It is a single first-hand account, and it should not be made to carry more weight than that, but it is the only instance in the evidence base where a participant reports the loss having happened rather than expecting it.

Participants also identified pressure to use AI that comes from outside the individual. Italian students described competitive anxiety, in which peers using AI to save time leaves those who are reluctant feeling they must adopt it in order not to fall behind. Irish participants described pressure from clients who expect AI to mean faster and cheaper delivery, which they saw as pushing quality down and reducing the room available for creative work. The two are different in origin, one arising among peers and one from the market, and neither report connects them.

In the Netherlands the concern extended beyond capability to autonomy and to relationships. Participants discussed the volume of personal information AI systems accumulate and the detailed profiles this allows, with one remarking that AI knows them better than they know themselves, and another that these systems are learning from us. The discussion moved from privacy to how much decision-making people may end up delegating to systems that know them that well. Participants also described people addressing AI systems as though they were social partners, and raised concerns about emotional attachment, including examples of AI-generated representations of deceased relatives. One participant worried that fewer people talk to each other. Italian participants raised part of this independently. One described AI becoming addictive when used not only for work but for ordinary decisions and emotional support, another hoped that relationships between people would remain central as young users increasingly turn to AI for relational advice, and a third suggested AI may progressively change how people think as it becomes an actor in personal expectations.

Irish teachers proposed a response that follows directly from this concern, arguing for protecting room in which students can experiment, make mistakes and find their own way through a creative problem. The responses that turn on where AI is placed in a programme of study are set out in 3.4.4.

3.2.2 Homogenisation and the value of design expertise

Two concerns sit together in this theme. The first is that AI-generated work tends towards sameness. The second is what happens to the standing of design expertise when competent-looking output becomes cheap to produce. Participants raised both, and the reports do not agree about the second.

Homogenisation was reported in Ireland, Austria, Italy and North Macedonia. The mechanism participants described is that AI draws on existing material and therefore reproduces it. Irish participants held that AI-generated content, because it works from existing visual material, produces work that looks similar and could over time make design culture more uniform and less varied. One participant called this "fast fashion of the brain", a phrase the Irish report reads as capturing a worry about high volumes of low-quality, similar-looking content. Austrian participants observed the same tendency directly in the tutorial, noting that the generated architectural concepts resembled one another and lacked diversity. In Italy standardisation was among the words participants used at the outset to describe AI, and it returns in the discussion of cultural standardisation. North Macedonian participants held that current models recombine existing information, and that genuine innovation depends on human imagination and insight.

A second-order worry attaches to this in the Irish and Italian discussions. It is not only that the output is uniform but that uniformity becomes the standard. Irish participants said that fully AI-generated work is generally seen as generic and unremarkable, and raised the concern that if such output becomes common it may come to be accepted as normal. The Italian discussion of educational needs closes on the corresponding worry about the designer, warning against students becoming average, dependent or interchangeable.

Participants in two countries connected uniformity to the concentration of the tools themselves. Italian participants raised dependence on global platforms and the monopolisation of models, framing it as a question of design sovereignty as well as of cultural standardisation. Irish participants recorded unease that the AI systems most people use are owned by a small number of large technology companies.

On the value of design expertise, the evidence splits. Slovenian students held that AI-generated content may contribute to the commodification of design services and make it harder for clients to recognise professional expertise. An Italian teacher asked directly whether AI-assisted design might devalue human work by removing the designer from the process. Irish participants described pressure from clients who expect AI to mean faster and cheaper delivery, which they saw as pushing quality down and leaving less room for creative work.

Participants in three countries described the opposite movement. Dutch participants held that AI makes creativity, craftsmanship, empathy, context and ethical judgement more important rather than less, on the grounds that someone has to decide what is automated, what is questioned and what stays human. Austrian participants concluded that human judgement, contextual understanding and professional expertise remain essential. North Macedonian participants held that traditional skills currently thrive as a premium pursuit in a heavily automated market, and that technological saturation has turned manual work into a marker of authenticity and irreplaceable human problem-solving rather than displacing it.

3.2.3 Representational bias

Concern that AI systems carry the biases of the material they were trained on, and reproduce them at scale, was raised in Austria, Slovenia and Italy. It is the least evenly covered theme in this report. Austria discussed it at length, Slovenia recorded it in a single statement, and the Italian material is adjacent rather than directly on the point.

The Austrian discussion turned on what the wider conversation about bias attends to. Participants observed that current research and public discussion concentrate on skin colour and gender, while other dimensions receive far less attention, giving religious clothing practices and broader cultural context as examples. Their concern was that biases already present in training data become reinforced and normalised through repeated use. They also asked whether the growing volume of AI-generated material online will further amplify stereotypes and narrow the range of representation, and concluded that datasets, outputs and the assumptions built into systems need to be examined critically rather than taken as given.

A related observation appears in the Austrian discussion of design quality. Participants working in architecture found that AI-generated proposals disregarded cultural appropriateness alongside local climate and safety regulation, and UI/UX participants found outputs that foregrounded sustainability narratives while neglecting usability. These are reported here because they concern what the systems treat as normal, though the Austrian report presents them as failures of contextual understanding rather than as bias.

Slovenian participants identified the risk of cultural bias embedded in AI training data, warning that outputs may reinforce dominant cultural perspectives while underrepresenting local identities, minority viewpoints and diverse design traditions. The Slovenian report states this without further discussion and gives no example.

The Italian material sits alongside this rather than within it. Participants there raised cultural standardisation in connection with dependence on global platforms and the monopolisation of models, framing the concern as one of design sovereignty. That is a concern about which design cultures dominate, which overlaps with the Slovenian point, but it is reached through market concentration rather than through training data. The distinction matters because the two imply different responses.

No other national focus group is recorded as having discussed representational bias. Bias appears elsewhere in the evidence base only as one item in lists of things designers should be able to recognise, alongside inaccurate information and unreliable sources, which is treated in 3.1.2 as part of the verification burden rather than as a concern about representation.

3.2.4 The changing shape of design work

Participants in all six countries raised the effect of AI on design employment and on the design market. No report develops it in detail and it appears in each as a small number of statements.

On displacement, Irish participants acknowledged that job losses are already occurring in areas such as marketing and advertising. North Macedonian participants named job displacement among the serious ethical problems associated with AI.

On new roles, Irish participants held that while some design roles may change, new roles will emerge and the field will adapt rather than shrink, and several participants placed the change in a sequence with stock photography, CGI and digital photography, each of which the industry absorbed. Dutch participants held that AI would automate tasks and also create new roles requiring AI supervision, creativity, problem framing, and collaboration between people and AI systems.

Participants in three countries expected AI competence to carry weight in the labour market and approached it from different positions. Ireland, Slovenia and Italy each took a different view of what that weight consists of. Irish students were recorded as more positive about AI than teachers or industry participants in their session, viewing it as a creative support and as something that will matter for their employment prospects. Slovenian industry representatives held that organisations increasingly require employees who understand both technological opportunities and regulatory responsibilities, which is the only statement anywhere in the evidence base about what employers now look for.

Italian participants described a division within the profession, in which some professionals resist AI because their existing workflow still functions while others feel pressure to adopt it in order to stay competitive. Austrian participants raised a different consequence, that financial inequalities may affect professional competitiveness as access to advanced AI tools becomes more important. The cost and access material that concern rests on is in 3.3.1.

Market conditions bearing on the work itself are treated elsewhere. Client expectations of faster and cheaper delivery, raised in Ireland, are in 3.2.1. The disagreement about whether AI raises or lowers the standing of design expertise is in 3.2.2.

3.3 Conditions and constraints

3.3.1 Cost, access and inequality

Cost was raised as a practical barrier in Ireland, Italy, Austria and Slovenia, and Irish participants identified it as the largest single obstacle to integrating AI into design education. The material concerns three things that participants did not always separate: what the tools cost, what unequal access does to students, and what unequal access does to the work itself.

The pricing structure participants described has the same features across countries. Capability sits behind subscriptions, and the useful tiers are the paid ones. Irish participants noted that subscriptions are expensive and that image generation in particular is costly at scale. Austrian participants identified subscription costs, token limits and access to premium models as barriers. Italian participants said that higher-performance experimentation often requires several subscriptions at once rather than one. Slovenian participants approached it from the institutional side, calling for access to professional software, institutional licences, suitable computing resources and secure digital environments.

On the consequences for students, participants in Ireland, Austria, Italy and Slovenia said the same thing in different registers. Irish participants held that premium subscriptions put students at a disadvantage and create unequal access, and called for institutional and government funding, without which they considered meaningful integration difficult. Austrian participants went further and named the mechanism, that students from wealthier families could gain educational advantages through better tools and that this may widen existing social inequalities. Italian participants observed that the inequality operates at more than one scale, between students and professionals and also between classmates in the same room. Slovenian participants located it between institutions as well as between learners, treating investment in infrastructure as a precondition for equitable AI education.

One Italian observation goes beyond access to opportunity and concerns the work produced. Participants there held that cost influences the quality of the output, on the grounds that better results depend on better tools and better tools cost more. The same discussion framed buying a system or software as a way of buying knowledge, with the consequence that access to knowledge becomes less democratic when the quality of what you can produce tracks what you can pay. This is the only place in the evidence base where cost is treated as a question about the work rather than about who gets to participate, and it changes what is at stake.

If capability is purchased, then differences in student output may reflect differences in spending rather than differences in ability, which bears directly on assessment.

A related practical consequence appears in the Italian discussion. Sharing subscriptions among students or groups was described as a way around the cost, and participants noted that it creates unclear ownership of the images and texts produced. That point is taken up in 3.3.2.

Access was also discussed as an opportunity rather than only as a constraint, in four countries. Irish participants held that AI could make certain design capabilities more accessible to people who lack particular technical skills. Austrian participants held that AI could lower barriers for non-experts, allowing people with limited technical skills to experiment with creative concepts and prototypes. Slovenian participants held that AI has the potential to democratise access to knowledge, creative tools and design support for people with different backgrounds and levels of experience. Italian participants discussed accessibility in both directions in the same conversation, recognising that AI can open access to knowledge while also making access conditional on the ability to pay.

Dutch participants took a different position from the others. Their conclusion was that access to AI tools is no longer the main issue, and that the larger educational need is the competence to use the tools critically and responsibly. They identified differences in access and in AI skills as a more pressing source of inequality.

Concentration of ownership belongs alongside cost as a structural condition rather than a price. Irish participants recorded unease that the systems most people use are owned by a small number of large technology companies, and Italian participants raised dependence on global platforms and the monopolisation of models. Both are reported in 3.2.2, where they bear on uniformity of output. They also mean that the price of access is set by a small number of suppliers, which no report states directly.

3.3.2 Authorship, ownership and legal uncertainty

Participants in Ireland, Slovenia, Italy, the Netherlands and North Macedonia raised uncertainty about who owns AI-assisted work and about whether the law currently answers the question. Austrian participants did not discuss ownership, naming copyright only among the subjects people need to be taught about. Three separate questions run through this material, and participants moved between them without always distinguishing them.

The first is ownership of the output. Dutch participants returned to this repeatedly, with one participant reducing it to the question of who owns the idea. The related question they raised, of who is accountable when an AI-assisted decision causes harm or an output turns out to be wrong, is treated in 3.1.3. Irish participants were uncertain about who owns AI-generated work and pointed to the absence of clear legal frameworks around authorship where AI is involved. Slovenian participants raised uncertainty about copyright ownership, intellectual property rights and authorship of AI-assisted work and asked who should be recognised as the creator of AI-generated content and how existing copyright legislation applies to generative systems. North Macedonian participants also named copyright as a serious ethical problem.

The second is whether the material these systems were trained on was used legitimately. Irish participants were concerned that existing creative work may have been used in training without permission and raised the possibility that the work of designers and artists could be used commercially by AI systems without their knowledge or compensation. Slovenian participants asked whether the datasets used to train AI systems respect the rights of original creators. This question is confined to those two countries in the evidence base.

The third arises from how the tools are paid for. Italian participants observed that sharing subscriptions among students or groups creates unclear ownership of the images and texts produced and held that students need legal awareness before using AI collaboratively, particularly where outputs are visual and might be reused. Cost drives the sharing, as recorded in 3.3.1, and the sharing generates the ownership problem.

Participants in two countries described the law as lagging. Dutch participants agreed that current legislation and institutional policies are still catching up, with one holding that the ethics and the law of AI need further development in order to regulate it, and the same discussion recorded a shared sense that technology is developing faster than the ethical, legal and educational frameworks around it. Slovenian participants recognised the growing importance of transparency, accountability and compliance with emerging European AI regulation, and held that designers and institutions will require clearer guidance on legally compliant use in both academic and commercial settings.

Participants in three countries said the response required is formal rather than informal. Irish participants held that these issues need proper legal and professional attention rather than informal guidelines. Italian participants called for institutional guidance covering ownership, rules for private as opposed to public platforms, and shared criteria for responsible use, and their report notes that this was requested rather than resolved. Slovenian participants identified copyright, intellectual property, authorship and data privacy as knowledge designers need, and stressed transparency where AI has contributed to a design.

Declaration of AI use by students is a related question that participants treated as a matter of academic conduct rather than of ownership. Dutch participants raised plagiarism, copyright and academic misconduct together in that context. That material is discussed in 3.4.2.

3.3.3 Institutional capacity, teacher development and pace of change

Participants in Ireland, Italy, Slovenia and the Netherlands described a gap between the speed at which AI tools are changing and the capacity of institutions to respond. Three connected shortfalls were reported: teachers are not prepared, policies do not exist or arrive late, and both training and guidance go out of date quickly.

Teacher preparation was raised as a priority in Ireland, Italy, Slovenia and the Netherlands. Irish participants held that keeping up with AI is largely left to individual educators rather than supported at institutional level and were clear that teachers need to be equipped before they can be expected to teach AI effectively.

They called for ongoing professional development rather than one-off training sessions, and one participant noted that younger students already know more than their teachers about parts of the digital environment, which was seen as adding urgency. Slovenian educators identified continuous professional development as necessary in order to stay confident and current. An Italian teacher pointed to the need to redesign assignments and timelines, which is a demand on teaching practice rather than on tool familiarity. Dutch participants placed continuing professional development among the conditions for responsible integration.

On policy, participants in four countries described institutions as behind the tools. Dutch teachers and students reported uncertainty about acceptable AI use, assessment, data protection and the boundary between assistance and misconduct, and participants there held that organisational policies are developing more slowly than the tools themselves. Their conclusion was that responsible integration depends on governance, infrastructure, protected platforms and continuing professional development, and not on individual skill alone. Italian participants asked for institutional guidance covering accounts and ownership, rules for private as against public platforms, and shared criteria for responsible use, and their report records that this was requested and not resolved. Irish participants sought clear learning outcomes and adequate support for teachers, describing these as practical requirements rather than aspirations. Slovenian participants identified secure digital environments as an institutional requirement alongside licences and computing resources.

The pace of change was itself reported as a problem, and not only as a cause of the shortfalls above. Irish participants identified the rate at which new tools appear as difficult to keep up with and as creating a feeling of pressure, and noted that course materials and guidelines date quickly, so institutions need ways of reviewing and updating them rather than treating AI integration as something set up once. Italian participants recorded pressure on students and professionals to keep pace among the risks in their discussion. Slovenian participants drew a teaching conclusion from it, recommending that transferable competences be taught rather than individual software applications, on the grounds that applications change rapidly.

Two proposals from the Irish discussion address the pace problem through shared practice rather than through institutional provision. Participants identified a need for spaces, formal and informal, in which educators and practitioners can exchange knowledge and stay current, and one described an existing informal arrangement where people meet over tea or coffee to share experience, valued as a low-effort form of peer learning. A more formal advisory group bringing together lecturers and industry practitioners was also proposed.

The same discussion recorded two instances of institutional AI provision failing. A participant mentioned that two universities, one in Vietnam and RMIT Melbourne, developed their own AI teaching tools and saw low uptake from students who considered them out of date or too closely monitored. Irish participants drew from this the lesson that educational AI tools need to feel current and useful to students. It is the only account in the evidence base of an institutional AI initiative and its reception, and it is reported through the experience of a participant rather than grounded in a formal evaluation of the initiative itself.

3.4 What design education needs

3.4.1 What AI literacy means and the argument about prompting

Participants in all six countries said that people are not currently equipped to use AI well, and the gap they described was not one of tool familiarity. Austrian participants held that current educational systems are not yet adequately preparing people to work critically and effectively with AI. Italian participants held that many users do not know what the tools can and cannot do, naming prompt writing, evaluating outputs and understanding how the systems work. Dutch participants held that the main need is the competence to use the tools critically and responsibly.

Prompting is where the reports disagree. Austrian participants identified the development of prompting skills as one of the most frequently mentioned needs, holding that output quality depends heavily on the quality and specificity of prompts, and their tutorial supplied the evidence: participants in both UI/UX and architecture found that the generated concepts suffered from missing context and vague instructions. Their conclusion was that users need to learn to write detailed prompts, supply contextual information and refine outputs iteratively. Irish participants identified prompt writing across all groups as an important skill, describing it as knowing how to ask AI for what is actually needed. Slovenian participants placed prompt development among the transferable competences that should be taught in preference to individual software applications.

Dutch participants questioned whether it would last. They accepted that better prompts produce better outputs but doubted whether prompt writing will remain a long-term skill, on the grounds that systems are increasingly able to generate and improve prompts themselves. One participant described using one AI system to write prompts for another. The report's conclusion is that prompt engineering may be useful now, and that education should not reduce AI literacy to prompt writing.

An Italian participant made a different objection to the same emphasis. The deeper issue was described as not prompt execution but designing the result, with prompts used as part of a broader reasoning process that includes intention, context and critical comparison. Austrian participants stated a version of this themselves, holding that technical prompting skill alone is insufficient and that users also need the critical capacity to judge whether an output is accurate, realistic, ethical and contextually appropriate.

The disagreement therefore has two forms. One is about durability, raised in the Netherlands, and it is a claim about where the technology is going. The other is about sufficiency, raised in Italy and conceded in Austria, and it is a claim about what prompting leaves out. Both point away from teaching prompting as a skill in its own right, but for different reasons, and only the Dutch position implies that it may not be worth teaching at all.

Beyond prompting, participants described AI literacy as several things at once. Critical evaluation of outputs is common to all six countries and is treated in 3.1.2. Knowledge of copyright, intellectual property and data protection is treated in 3.3.2. Three further components appear here. The first is understanding how the systems work, with Austrian participants concerned that many users do not understand how models are trained or how bias arises, and Dutch participants describing themselves as working in the dark about the mechanics. The second is recognising AI-generated material, raised in Ireland as a practical skill in images, writing and other media. A third is knowing the differences between the available systems, raised in Italy as something students need to learn and described in the Netherlands as students already choosing between systems by task, which the Dutch report reads as a more developed form of AI literacy than familiarity with a single tool.

Austrian participants described the gap as falling differently by age, holding that older users may need additional support and training while younger users may adopt tools quickly without fully understanding their risks and limitations. The Irish discussion recorded the same asymmetry from the teaching side, noting that younger students already know more than their teachers about parts of the digital environment.

Irish participants set the widest frame, describing a broader digital literacy that covers a basic understanding of how AI works, awareness of data privacy and the ability to use digital tools with integrity, and arguing that it should be taught from an early age and given the same importance as numeracy and literacy. The same discussion named creativity as a skill that should be actively maintained rather than assumed.

On how these competences should be taught, participants in three countries favoured practice over instruction. Slovenian participants advocated hands-on workshops, interdisciplinary projects, design challenges and real-world case studies that let students experiment with AI while reflecting on the results and argued for teaching transferable competences rather than particular applications because applications change quickly. Italian participants argued for balancing theory, analysis, process learning and practical application through work with real companies and real constraints. Austrian participants argued that education should place greater emphasis on interpretation, reflection and explaining reasoning rather than on producing final outputs, which is an argument about assessment as much as about teaching and is taken up in 3.4.2.

Two countries made the point that better tools and better technical skills are not the whole answer. The Italian discussion warned that what is needed is an educational culture that teaches students who they are as designers and how to maintain a personal voice. Dutch participants held that AI literacy belongs within a broader set of competences including critical thinking, ethical awareness and domain expertise. Slovenian participants put the same thought as a distinction of purpose, that the goal is not to educate AI users but responsible designers who know how to work with AI. North Macedonian participants reported that students know tools built for designers exist but are not well informed about them and use AI mainly for information and text.

3.4.2 Assessment under pressure

Participants in Ireland, Italy, Austria and the Netherlands described assessment as a practice that AI has made unreliable. The problem they identified is not that students use AI but that a finished output no longer tells a teacher what the student can do.

The mechanism was described most directly in Italy and Austria. An Italian teacher noted that AI has changed how quickly students can produce research, renders and presentations, which puts pressure on assignments, timelines and assessment standards designed for slower work. Austrian participants held that traditional grading based only on final outputs may no longer be effective, and that evaluating competence is difficult where AI tools are used extensively. Italian teachers described the position they are left in: where a student submits AI-generated research, renderings or briefs, the teacher has to establish whether the task was analysed or outsourced.

Participants in three countries proposed the same solution, which is to assess the process rather than the artefact. Austrian participants proposed greater use of presentations, oral examinations and reflective explanations to establish whether a student understands the material and argued more broadly that education should place greater emphasis on interpretation, reflection and explaining reasoning rather than on producing final outputs. Italian participants proposed in-class tasks, oral tests, comparison of process stages and evaluation of the prompt history as ways of distinguishing genuine learning from passive output, and their report states the requirement as teachers needing methods to assess process and not only output. Dutch participants held that assessment may need to shift more strongly towards process.

The Italian discussion adds a condition on which the process approach depends. Several participants argued that AI use should be normalised rather than hidden, on the grounds that students already use it, and that the aim should be to make its use visible, discussable and assessable. The recommendation that follows is to stop asking whether AI was used and ask how it was used. Concealment is treated as the obstacle, with hidden use named among the risks, and openness treated as the precondition for assessing anything. Evidence that concealment is a real difficulty rather than an anticipated one comes from North Macedonia, where students were initially unwilling to acknowledge how much they rely on AI in their studies and in daily life.

Dutch participants described the institutional side of the same problem. Teachers and students there reported uncertainty about acceptable AI use, about assessment, and about where assistance ends and misconduct begins. Their ethical discussion opened on plagiarism, copyright and academic misconduct before moving to other matters, which places declared and undeclared use in the register of academic conduct. The uncertainty was attributed to policies developing more slowly than the tools, which is treated in 3.3.3.

A sequencing problem appears in the Irish discussion. Industry representatives and educators there both raised the concern that students are sometimes assessed on their use of AI before they have been taught how to use it, or how to use it responsibly. This is the reverse of the concern in the other countries. It is not that AI makes assessment unreliable, but that assessment has moved ahead of teaching.

Two conditions bearing on assessment are established elsewhere in this report. The first is that outputs cannot be evaluated at face value, since AI-generated material can appear convincing while being wrong, which means a teacher assessing an output is also performing the verification described in 3.1.2. The second is that access to the better tools depends on the ability to pay, recorded in 3.3.1, where Italian participants held that cost influences the quality of the work. Taken together these could mean that a graded output may reflect the tool used as much as the understanding of the student.

3.4.3 Material knowledge as the means of verification

The verification burden set out in 3.1.2 raises the question of what a person needs to know in order to judge an AI output. Participants in Ireland, Italy, Slovenia, Austria and North Macedonia answered it in terms of design knowledge itself, and specifically the knowledge that comes from making things. Traditional skill was described not as something to be protected from AI but as the means by which AI output can be tested.

The Italian discussion states the argument most fully. Participants returned repeatedly to prototyping, making, manual imperfection and real-world testing, and the report draws the conclusion that traditional skills are not obsolete but become a means of verifying whether AI outputs can function in material, cultural and social reality. The test cases given are concrete: AI may generate a visually persuasive object, but a chair must still stand, a garment must still be constructed, and a narrative must still carry lived emotion. Two participants proposed the corresponding teaching method, that AI-generated proposals should be tested in material contexts, so that a chair with two legs or a garment with no seams becomes a question the student has to answer about whether the thing can be made. One argued for finished products rather than purely virtual outputs, in order to keep students working in real rather than simulated creativity. The report frames this as shifting AI from a replacement for design to a provocation that has to be checked through design knowledge.

Austrian participants reached the same conclusion from professional regulation rather than from craft. Their position was that manual design skills, critical thinking and domain-specific knowledge remain necessary in order to evaluate whether AI-generated solutions are feasible, safe and meaningful, and one participant observed that AI-generated architectural concepts may look convincing while being impossible to build. The concrete tests in that discussion are local building law, climate conditions, material suitability and fall protection, as recorded in 3.1.2.

Irish participants described what physical engagement with materials provides, naming the handling of fabric, working with one's hands, and the accidental discoveries that come from making things, and held that AI cannot replicate these and that they matter to design practice. That account is about what making yields rather than about verification, and the Irish report treats it under what should remain human. The same discussion held that the thinking behind a design, and the development of skill and judgement over time, belong to the designer rather than the tool.

Slovenian participants placed the emphasis on sequence. AI education should reinforce rather than replace traditional design competencies, with creativity, problem-solving, visual communication, empathy, user-centred thinking and craftsmanship named as fundamental attributes, and AI introduced as an additional instrument rather than an alternative to developing core skills. Several participants held that students should first understand design methods and creative processes before relying extensively on AI-generated solutions, which was seen as necessary for preserving originality, independent thinking and professional judgement.

North Macedonian participants described a market condition rather than an educational requirement. Their position was that traditional skills currently thrive as a premium pursuit in a heavily automated market, and that technological saturation has made manual work a marker of authenticity and of irreplaceable human problem-solving. Curriculum sequence was addressed separately in that discussion, with educators holding that AI should not enter before the third year and that the order should be human first and AI afterwards.

One could argue that the verification burden and the case for material knowledge are the same argument seen from two ends: if AI output has to be checked against reality, then the capacity to check it is the thing design education cannot afford to lose.

3.4.4 Curriculum placement and sequencing

Participants addressed two separate questions about where AI belongs in a programme of study. The first is whether it is taught as a subject of its own or embedded in existing teaching. The second is when in a programme it should arrive. There is broad agreement on the first and disagreement on the second.

On embedding, participants in five countries reached the same position. Irish participants held that AI should be taught as a tool within design education, integrated into existing courses and learning goals, rather than as a subject on its own or as something that replaces core design skills, and their view across all groups was that AI is a working tool and that this should be the basis for how it is taught. Slovenian participants concluded that the future of design education should not be centred on teaching AI as a separate subject but on embedding it across the curriculum. Italian participants held that AI should be integrated as an object of critical practice, treated neither as a forbidden shortcut nor as a neutral tool. Dutch participants held that AI should not be treated only as another software tool and that curricula need to support a broader set of competences. Austrian participants argued for combining AI education with traditional domain expertise rather than treating AI as a separate discipline.

The Irish discussion holds a second position alongside this one. Participants called for AI to be given a clear and formal place in design curricula, either as a dedicated module or as an explicit part of course learning outcomes, rather than being left to individual lecturers or treated as optional. A dedicated module is a form of separate provision, so the two positions in that discussion are not straightforwardly compatible. The report records both without reconciling them.

On timing, the positions differ. Irish participants supported early introduction while naming a risk that came with it, that it may give students the impression that creative work is straightforward or that effort and skill can be bypassed, and they proposed visual demonstration and teaching students to distinguish AI-generated from human-made work as methods suited to earlier stages. Slovenian participants held that students should first understand design methods and creative processes before relying extensively on AI-generated solutions, which they regarded as necessary for preserving originality, independent thinking and professional judgement. North Macedonian professors held that AI should not enter the curriculum before the third year and fifth semester, on the grounds that AI is not beneficial early in the design process and that the sequence should be human first and AI afterwards, and the report records the professors as holding differing opinions on this. Italian participants argued against deferral, holding that students already use AI and that the educational response should be to make that use visible, discussable and assessable rather than to postpone it.

Slovenian academic staff made a placement argument about ethics specifically, holding that ethical reflection should not be taught as an isolated topic but integrated throughout design education, so that students consider the societal consequences of AI-assisted design decisions. Slovenian participants generally supported introducing AI early in the learning process, but not as a substitute for foundational design education. Students and educators stressed that AI should be progressively integrated while learners continue to develop design methods, creative processes and core professional competences.

4 National Overview

This section provides a snapshot of each of the six national focus groups in turn: who took part, how the session was run, and what the discussion concentrated on. All six worked from a shared set of thematic areas, so the profiles below are accounts of six discussions about AI in design, not accounts of six national education systems. The findings themselves are set out by theme in Section 3, and the countries are compared in Section 6. Sessions are presented in the order they were held. Full participant figures are given in Section 2.

4.1 The Netherlands

The Dutch focus group was held at Wittenborg University of Applied Sciences in Apeldoorn on 30 April 2026 and ran for about two hours, followed immediately by a practical AI workshop. Twelve participants took part, three students, six teachers and three industry professionals, working in product design, software design, and business and operations. The session was semi-structured, and with participants' consent it was audio recorded and transcribed for analysis.

Participants described AI as already part of daily routine in study and at work, so the discussion turned on how it should be used rather than whether to use it. Students described moving between different tools according to the task. Teachers spoke about preparation, workload and administration, and about wanting the time saved to return to teaching and mentoring. Industry participants returned repeatedly to checking and supervision, with examples of AI-generated work that had to be reviewed before it could be used. Much of the session concerned the link between convenience and dependency, including an account of programming knowledge lost after heavy AI use during an internship. The ethical discussion moved past plagiarism and copyright towards personal data, profiling, accountability when an AI-assisted decision goes wrong, and the effect of AI on relationships between people. Participants also described learning to use AI through trial and error rather than through any structured guidance.

4.2 Ireland

The Irish focus group was organised by the IDEAM Research Institute in collaboration with the Limerick School of Art and Design, both part of the Technological University of the Shannon, on 18 May 2026. The discussion ran for 120 minutes and was followed by a 90-minute hands-on workshop on digital garment development, which demonstrated how general-purpose AI tools can be used alongside specialist design software. Eleven participants took part, three students, four teachers and four industry professionals, working mainly in fashion and textile design, with graphic, product and engineering design also represented. Questions were put to the group one at a time. Participants wrote individual responses on notes colour coded by stakeholder group, and each point was then discussed and recorded on a flipchart.

Current uses of AI were concentrated in early visual work: image generation, initial sketches, colour direction, mood boards and technical documentation. Copyright and intellectual property were treated as the most pressing ethical and legal problem, and the possibility that existing creative work has been used in training data without permission was raised directly.

Job losses in marketing and advertising were described as already happening, alongside the view that new roles will emerge as they have with earlier technologies. The cost of subscriptions, the sameness of fully AI-generated work, and prompting as a skill that is not taught were the other recurring concerns. Participants also addressed where AI belongs in a programme of study, holding that it should sit inside existing courses rather than in a subject of its own and be given a formal place in curricula rather than left to individual lecturers, and that control of the concept and of final decisions should stay with the designer.

4.3 Austria

The Austrian focus group was run by the Know Center on 20 May 2026 and lasted 180 minutes including a break. Seven participants took part, two students, two teachers and three industry professionals, working in UX design, architecture, and digital design and marketing. The session opened with an introduction to the project and a summary of its earlier research on AI in design, and a substantial part of it was given over to a tutorial in which participants assessed AI-generated design concepts from architectural and UX perspectives.

Because much of the session was spent judging specific generated outputs, the discussion of quality dealt with particular examples rather than with AI outputs in general. UX participants criticised the examples for weak functionality and missing design rationale. Architecture participants accepted the value of AI in early conceptual work while pointing to building regulation, climate, material suitability and safety requirements as things the outputs ignored, holding that responsibility for compliance stays with the human professional. The discussion of bias was similarly specific. Participants observed that attention concentrates on skin colour and gender while religious dress and wider cultural context receive less. Subscription costs and token limits were raised as a source of unequal access, and participants questioned how competence can be assessed fairly when AI tools are widely available.

4.4 Slovenia

The Slovenian focus groups were run online by the Faculty of Design in three separate sessions, one for each stakeholder group, on 4 June, 8 June and 9 July 2026. Each ran for approximately 120 minutes, 360 minutes in total. Ten participants took part, four students, three teachers and three industry professionals, working in interior design, design management and visual communication. Because the three groups met separately, positions shared across stakeholder groups were identified across the three sessions rather than reached in discussion between them.

Students described AI as a learning companion and personal tutor, while academic staff also highlighted its potential for personalised learning and independent inquiry. Industry participants approached AI through productivity, workflow and competitiveness, coupled with human oversight. Legal uncertainty was set out at length, covering copyright ownership, authorship, training data, and compliance with emerging European AI regulation. Participants treated accessibility in two ways at once, as a democratisation of knowledge and creative tools and as a source of widening inequality where the better tools are costly. Cultural bias in training data and the energy consumption of large models were both raised.

A notable difference concerned where AI creates the greatest value: students and academic staff emphasised early-stage ideation and learning support, whereas industry participants placed stronger emphasis on research, analysis and implementation, and were more cautious about AI in highly creative conceptual work.

4.5 Italy

The Italian focus group was held at Accademia Italiana in Rome on 17 June 2026 and ran for approximately 180 minutes in two parts. Nine participants took part, three students, three teachers and three industry professionals, working in fashion design and management, interior design, product design, art direction, copywriting and advertising, and AI-supported fashion consultancy. Participants opened by offering keywords for their general view of AI, which produced terms including facilitation, threat, speed and standardisation.

Students described competitive pressure to adopt AI in order to keep pace with peers, and a risk of dependency extending beyond study into ordinary decisions. Teachers concentrated on assessment, on whether a submitted piece of work reflects analysis or outsourcing, and on the position of the teacher when students present AI output as correct. Ownership was discussed in concrete terms, including the position of students who share a subscription and the rights the account holder may hold over what others produce with it. Cost was described as affecting the quality of work that can be produced, which puts students on unequal terms with one another. Participants returned repeatedly to making and prototyping as the means of testing whether an AI-generated proposal can exist in material form. The position recorded as most widely shared was that AI is a support tool and not a substitute for human judgement, experience and expression.

4.6 North Macedonia

The North Macedonian focus group was hosted by the Faculty of Design and Technology of Furniture and Interior at Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje on 16 July 2026, as a single session with all three stakeholder groups together, running for approximately three hours. Nine participants took part, three students, three teachers and three industry professionals, working in furniture and interior design, graphic design, photography and multimedia, and outdoor furniture and urban equipment. The session was structured around four prepared presentations, given by teachers, a student and an industry participant, with discussion following each one.

The discussion was therefore shaped by material presented to it rather than opened by questions alone, and participants are recorded as agreeing on most of the questions put to them. Copyright, lack of transparency and job displacement were identified as the main ethical problems. Traditional skills were described as gaining value rather than losing it, treated as a mark of authenticity in a heavily automated environment. Teachers differed on when AI should enter the curriculum, the point at issue being whether it should be available before the third year, fifth semester. Environmental concern was raised in local terms. Participants pointed to recurring public protests in North Macedonian cities over environmental issues, most recently over the construction of data centres and before that over water pollution.

5 The Pan-European Conference

The Pan-European Conference on Digital Education was held online on 28 May 2026. It produced two bodies of participatory evidence: responses to a Mentimeter survey run before and during the event, and contributions to a Padlet poster session in which teachers shared examples of how they use AI in their own teaching. The survey captured expectations, insights and concerns. The poster session captured practice.

As opposed to the Focus Group sessions, the conference addressed AI in education generally rather than AI in design education specifically. Contributions came primarily from education professionals and did not divide into separate groups of students, teachers and companies, so the material is reported here as a single body of views rather than compared across stakeholder groups.

What follows is a set of qualitative insights from voluntary contributions. It is not statistically representative, and it is not evidence about the state of design education in the countries from which participants registered. Points where the conference evidence meets, extends or diverges from the national focus group findings are taken up separately in Section 6.5.

5.1 Mentimeter Survey

Before and during the conference, participants were invited to take part in a short survey on the Mentimeter platform, in which they were asked about AI's contributions and their concerns regarding its use. In total, 20 responses were received.

The responses show that participants primarily see AI as a practical support tool that can make their work faster, easier and more efficient. Across the answers to “I expect AI will help me”, the most common expectations relate to saving time, supporting routine and repetitive tasks, preparing texts and documents, analysing information, creating graphics or social media content, translating and reviewing scientific articles, and generating new ideas for professional practice. Several participants also associated AI with learning, personal development and support in everyday tasks. At the same time, even within these expectations, some reservations were already visible, particularly around privacy, overdependence on AI, reduced direct human contact, and the risk that people may stop thinking critically for themselves.

The answers to “My insight from today” suggest that the session helped participants develop a more balanced and mature understanding of AI. Participants recognised AI as a useful tool for work and learning, but not as a replacement for human judgement or professional responsibility. A repeated insight was that AI should be used “wisely”, “responsibly” and “critically”. Participants also highlighted the importance of improving their own AI-related skills, especially in relation to prompting. They noted that assigning AI a clear role, asking follow-up questions and formulating precise prompts can improve the quality of the responses. Another important learning point was the need to protect personal data, avoid sharing sensitive information and verify facts rather than accepting AI-generated content uncritically.

The answers to “I am concerned that AI might...” reveal several clear areas of concern. Participants were most worried that AI could reduce independent thinking, especially among younger people, and weaken people’s ability to analyse information and situations on their own. They were also concerned about incorrect or misleading answers, particularly because errors may not always be easy to verify. Privacy and data security were another strong theme, including concerns about conversations, shared materials and personal information being exposed or misused. Additional concerns included the possibility that AI could produce impersonal, repetitive or low-quality content; reduce direct contact between people; replace workers in some professions; be used unethically; influence decisions; misunderstand user intentions; or ultimately create more risks than benefits.

5.2 Padlet Poster Session

Teachers and professors were invited through an e-mail newsletter on 27 April 2026 to collaborate in an online poster session on Padlet. The poster session invited participants to share good practices in the use of artificial intelligence in education, either for lesson/lecture preparation or for classroom/lecture work with students. Materials on ethical aspects of AI use were also welcomed. Participants had approximately one month to contribute before the conference on 28 May, while the Padlet instructions allowed submissions until 31 May. The criteria stated that presentations had to be in English, had to present a teaching practice showing the use of AI in education, had to include the participant’s full name and presentation title, and had to include an e-mail address. The Padlet instructions also stated that certificates would be sent to relevant good practices after review. In total, 126 contributions were submitted. After review, 53 were assessed as eligible according to the poster-session criteria and were therefore considered relevant for active participation certification.

5.2.1 Good practices in AI in lesson preparation

The Padlet contributions show that teachers are using AI primarily as a support tool for designing richer, more differentiated and more visually engaging learning materials. A strong group of practices focused on using AI to generate lesson ideas, structure activities, create stories, design worksheets, prepare presentations, produce images, and adapt content to pupils’ age and learning needs. For example, several teachers used AI to create preschool stories, insect-themed digital flipbooks, STEAM activities, literature-based visual essays, vocabulary flashcards, educational posters, music activities, and subject-specific materials in geography, biology, literature and language learning.

A particularly strong good-practice type was differentiation and inclusion. Some contributions showed how AI can help teachers prepare remedial worksheets, simplified texts, visual storyboards, phonics-focused stories, multimodal materials and adapted learning resources for students with reading difficulties, speech delays or other learning barriers. These examples position AI as a tool for educational accessibility: not replacing the teacher but helping the teacher respond more quickly and precisely to diverse classroom needs.

Another important good-practice type was multimodal lesson design. Teachers used AI together with tools such as Canva, Padlet, PowerPoint, NotebookLM, Kahoot!, Clipchamp, Narakeet, Chalkie and AI image generators to combine text, image, sound, video, quizzes, digital storytelling and interactive tasks. These practices suggest that AI is most useful when it is embedded in a broader pedagogical design rather than used as a stand-alone generator of content.

The strongest examples also showed teacher control and professional judgement. They described AI as a planning assistant that can save time and increase creativity, while the teacher remains responsible for accuracy, age-appropriateness, curriculum alignment and classroom relevance. This is an important finding: the good practices did not present AI as a replacement for teachers, but as a co-creative tool that helps teachers prepare more engaging, personalised and inclusive learning experiences.

5.2.2 Good practices in teaching students about AI

The second category focused on AI literacy: helping students understand what AI can do, how to use it responsibly and where its risks are. These contributions were especially valuable because they moved beyond using AI only as a productivity tool. They presented AI as a topic that students need to understand critically, ethically and practically.

One clear type of good practice was teaching responsible prompting and critical use. For example, some contributions asked students to think before prompting: What is my goal? Am I protecting my privacy? Is the information accurate and fair? Can I explain how AI was used and what my own contribution is? This type of activity is pedagogically strong because it frames prompting not as a technical trick, but as a form of responsible thinking and communication.

Another good-practice type was teaching students to evaluate AI outputs. Several activities required students to create AI-supported posters, books, images or presentations and then check accuracy, identify possible errors, improve prompts, compare outputs and reflect on the quality of the results. For example, in the “From Myth to Poster” activity, students used ChatGPT and AI image generators to create visual presentations about Greek myths, but they also critically evaluated the generated information and illustrations.

A further good-practice type was student creation with AI. Students created chatbots, AI-supported fables, digital journeys, posters, flyers, visual stories and classroom materials. These activities supported creativity, language production, digital literacy, collaboration and critical thinking. The stronger examples made students active creators rather than passive users of AI-generated answers.

The Padlet also included important examples of ethics, privacy and digital safety. Teachers addressed topics such as safe online collaboration, digital footprints, algorithmic influence, echo chambers, misinformation, AI risks, overreliance, authorship and the need to distinguish AI support from one’s own work. This shows that participants understood AI education not only as a technical skill, but also as part of wider digital citizenship.

6 Comparative Analysis

This section sets the six national focus groups against one another. It does not repeat the findings, which are set out by theme in Section 3, but asks a different question: where the six discussions agreed, where they did not, and how much of the difference between them can be attributed to how the sessions were run rather than to the countries in which they were held.

Three limits apply throughout. All six groups worked from the same thematic areas, so the comparison is between six discussions about AI in design and not between six national education systems. The design fields represented differed considerably, with fashion and textiles prominent in Ireland, architecture and UX in Austria, and furniture and interior design in North Macedonia, so what counted as a typical design problem was not the same in each room. The national reports also vary in the range of thematic areas they cover in comparable detail, and comparison is drawn here only where the material exists in the source.

Table 2 below records which of the fourteen themes set out in Section 3 each national report covers, and how far it takes each one. It is a guide to how much weight the comparisons in this section can carry, rather than a finding in its own right.

Table 2 Theme Coverage and Depth by National Report

Theme	NL	IE	AT	SI	IT	MK
3.1.1 Where the value sits	●	●	●	●	●	●
3.1.2 The verification burden	●	●	●	●	●	○
3.1.3 Human oversight and decision authority	●	●	●	●	●	●
3.2.1 Over-reliance and erosion of capability	●	●	●	●	●	○
3.2.2 Homogenisation and the value of design expertise	○	●	●	○	●	●
3.2.3 Representational bias	—	—	●	○	○	—
3.2.4 The changing shape of design work	○	●	○	○	○	○
3.3.1 Cost, access and inequality	●	●	●	●	●	○
3.3.2 Authorship, ownership and legal uncertainty	●	●	○	●	●	○
3.3.3 Institutional capacity, teacher development and pace of change	●	●	—	●	●	—
3.4.1 What AI literacy means and the argument about prompting	●	●	●	●	●	○
3.4.2 Assessment under pressure	●	●	●	○	●	○
3.4.3 Material knowledge as the means of verification	—	●	●	●	●	●
3.4.4 Curriculum placement and sequencing	○	●	○	●	●	○

● substantial discussion ○ brief mention, a single statement or clause — not present in the material drawn on here

Notes to the table:

1. The table records the material each national report contributes to this analysis. A topic may have been discussed in a session and not written up, so absence is not evidence about what participants considered important.
2. Presence does not indicate agreement. On the standing of design expertise in 3.2.2, on the importance of cost in 3.3.1, and on when AI should enter the curriculum in 3.4.4, countries marked here take opposed positions. Section 6.2 sets these out.

3. The Italian mark under 3.2.3 records material that sits alongside the theme rather than within it. Italian participants reached cultural standardisation through platform concentration rather than through training data.
4. The distinction between a substantial discussion and a brief mention is a judgement made in preparing this report and not a feature of the sources.

6.1 Points of convergence

Two positions are held in all six countries and were reached in sessions run in five different formats, in countries with very different design sectors. Participants everywhere described AI output as something that cannot be used as it arrives and has to be checked against knowledge the system does not hold. Participants everywhere, and across every stakeholder group, held that habitual use erodes the capability of the person using it. The verification burden concerns participants' present experience of using AI, while the erosion of capability was expressed predominantly as a shared concern about habitual use, with only limited first-hand evidence of actual capability loss.

A third position is held in all six countries and is normative rather than descriptive. Participants everywhere held that certain decisions must remain with a person, whether the emphasis fell on authorship of the final decision, on accountability for it, or on the qualities they held AI cannot supply. This agreement should be read with the method in mind, since every group was asked directly how the human touch can be maintained, and it is the only one of the strong convergences that was prompted by a question in those terms.

Agreement extends to two further points. Participants in all six countries described the gap in AI competence as something other than tool familiarity, locating it in judgement, critical evaluation and understanding of how the systems work. Participants in five countries described uncertainty about who owns AI-assisted work and whether existing law answers the question, with Austria the exception.

Agreement narrows as the discussions move from diagnosis to response. Five groups located the clearest value of AI in early-stage work: Ireland, Slovenia, Italy, Austria and the Netherlands. Five answered the question of what equips a person to judge an output in terms of design knowledge acquired through making: Ireland, Austria, Slovenia, Italy and North Macedonia. Below that level the convergence breaks up, and Section 3 records the responses proposed as differing by country: protected room for experimentation in Ireland, curriculum sequencing in North Macedonia, Slovenia and Ireland, and visible rather than prohibited use in Italy.

6.2 Points of difference

One question divides the evidence outright. On what AI does to the standing of design expertise, Slovenian and Irish participants described commodification, devaluation and downward pressure on quality from clients expecting faster and cheaper work. Dutch, Austrian and North Macedonian participants described the opposite movement, in which human judgement, contextual understanding and manual skill become more valuable rather than less, with North Macedonian participants treating traditional skill as a premium pursuit in a saturated market. The two positions are not compatible as stated.

Cost divides the discussions by emphasis rather than by position. Irish participants identified it as the single largest obstacle to integrating AI into design education. Austrian participants treated it as a mechanism by which economic advantage becomes educational advantage. Italian participants alone took it as a question about the work itself, holding that what a student can produce tracks what they can pay. Slovenian participants approached it institutionally, as licences, infrastructure and secure environments. Dutch participants took the opposite view of its importance, concluding that access is no longer the main issue and that competence prohibits limits access too.

Curriculum placement divides the discussions on one question and not on the other. Participants in Ireland, Slovenia, Italy, the Netherlands and Austria agreed that AI belongs inside existing design teaching rather than in a subject of its own. On when it should arrive they did not agree. Irish participants supported early introduction with the risk named and teaching methods proposed to manage it, Slovenian participants supported early but carefully sequenced introduction, with AI progressively integrated alongside the development of foundational design competences. North Macedonian professors placed it no earlier than the third year, and Italian participants argued against deferral altogether on the grounds that students already use AI. This is the difference with the most direct bearing on teaching material, because the four positions imply different programmes rather than different emphases.

Two further differences are worth stating. On the environment, Irish participants identified AI as reducing material waste in garment development and sampling, while Slovenian participants raised the energy consumption of large models as a concern running the other way. On prompting, participants in Austria, Ireland, Slovenia and Italy treated it as a skill to be taught. Dutch participants doubted it would remain one, on the grounds that systems increasingly write prompts themselves. Italian and Austrian participants held separately that prompting skill on its own is not sufficient.

6.3 Differences attributable to session design

Some of what looks like national difference follows from how the sessions were run, and Section 4 sets out the formats.

The Austrian discussion of output quality is the most concrete in the evidence base, naming building law, climate, material suitability and fall protection. That session included a tutorial in which participants assessed generated concepts from their own disciplinary positions. The specificity is a property of the method, not evidence that Austrian participants were more alert to these constraints than others.

The Slovenian report attributes positions to students, teachers and industry more cleanly than any other, because the three groups met in separate sessions. Any apparent pattern across stakeholder groups in this evidence base is therefore shaped by which reports separated them clearly, and stakeholder comparison is not attempted here for that reason.

North Macedonian participants are recorded as agreeing on most of the questions put to them. That session was structured around four prepared presentations with discussion following each. Material presented to a group is a different starting point from a question opened to it, and the degree of settlement in that discussion should be read against the format.

6.4 National context in the discussions

Very little in the six discussions is anchored to a particular country. Participants described AI as a shared condition of design work rather than as something taking a different form in each national market, and the reports record almost no discussion of national policy, national industry structure or national curricula.

Three exceptions appear. North Macedonian participants placed environmental concern in a local setting, pointing to recurring public protests over the construction of data centres and, before that, over water pollution. It is the only place in the evidence base where a concern is tied to a named national context. Slovenian participants raised compliance with emerging European regulation, which is a supranational rather than a national frame. Irish participants discussed two universities abroad whose in-house AI teaching tools saw low uptake, which is the only account anywhere in the evidence of an institutional initiative and its reception, and it is reported at second hand.

6.5 The conference against the national findings

The conference material is different in kind. It comes from education professionals across disciplines rather than from design specifically, much of it from school-level teaching, and the poster contributions record practice rather than opinion. It is not a seventh national case and is not treated as one.

Where it meets the national findings, it does so on all three of the strongest points of convergence. The concern raised most often in the survey was that AI reduces independent thinking, particularly among younger people, which matches the erosion of capability reported in all six countries. Verification also recurs, with participants describing the need to check facts rather than accept generated content, and the stronger poster contributions built evaluation of outputs into the activity itself. The third convergence appears in both bodies of conference material. Survey participants recorded AI as useful for work and learning but not as a replacement for human judgement or professional responsibility. The poster contributions showed the same position in practice rather than as a statement of principle, with the teacher remaining answerable for accuracy, age-appropriateness and curriculum alignment while AI worked as a planning assistant. This is the only place in the evidence base where the claim that certain decisions must remain with a person is visible in described practice. Prompting appears in the conference material as a skill worth improving, which aligns with the Austrian, Irish and Slovenian position rather than with the Dutch doubt.

The conference extends the national findings in one respect. Accessibility appears in the national discussions as a question of who can afford the tools and, against that, as AI lowering the barrier of technical skill for people without formal training. In the poster contributions it appears as differentiation and inclusion in practice, with teachers describing adapted materials for students with reading difficulties, speech delays and other learning barriers. That form of inclusion does not appear in the design discussions, and it is the only body of evidence in this report showing accessibility addressed rather than described.

Two silences are worth recording. Cost and access do not appear in the conference material at all, although cost was the largest single obstacle identified in Ireland and was raised in the Italian, Austrian and Slovenian focus groups as well. Copyright appears in the poster contributions only as a question of academic integrity, in the form of authorship and of distinguishing AI support from a student's own work. Ownership of outputs, rights in AI-generated work, and the use of existing creative work as training data, all of which were raised in the national discussions, do not appear.

7 Implications for Design Education and the AIDEA Project

Six discussions and input gathered from one conference cannot establish what design education across Europe should do. What they can establish is what the people who took part hold, where they agree and where they do not, and what is implied for a design programme deciding how to respond to AI. Two further outputs of this project, a set of guiding principles and a handbook of teaching tools and methodologies for educators, will draw on these findings, and 7.10 and 7.11 set out what the evidence implies for these resources. Requests participants made of design education are set out in Section 3.4.

7.1 The capability to judge

Three positions run through every discussion: that AI output cannot be used as it arrives, that certain decisions must remain with a person, and that habitual use erodes the capability of the person using it. The first two describe someone who checks and decides. The third describes that person's capability declining. Human oversight cannot be assumed to be a safeguard. A designer formally answerable for an output but without the knowledge to test it is accountable in name only, and so is a teacher marking work made with tools they have not been trained on.

This settles what the competence at stake is. Participants located it in design knowledge acquired through making, and the tests they gave are tests of design rather than of the tool: whether a chair stands, whether a garment can be constructed, whether a building meets regulation and climate. A curriculum treating AI integration as teaching students to operate the tools therefore addresses something other than the difficulty participants described. It also puts craft and material teaching on a footing other than preservation, as the instrument by which output is tested. Craft knowledge and AI capability are not two things a designer holds side by side. One is the means of governing the other.

7.2 What design education is being asked to develop

Three groups of competence appear across the discussions. The first is foundational design capability: sketching, observation, prototyping, iterative experimentation, visual communication, problem-solving, craftsmanship and user-centred thinking. The second is critical and evaluative capability: judging whether an output is accurate, appropriate, usable and legally compliant, understanding enough of the systems to know where they fail, and recognising AI-generated material. The third is judgement about meaning, cultural context and emotional resonance, which participants held to be least substitutable and said least about how to teach.

They are not three strands to be covered separately. The second depends on the first, since evaluating an output requires knowing what a good one looks like, and the third is what the first two serve. The discussions locate the gap in the second group rather than in tool familiarity, so a shortage described as one of AI skills is, on this evidence, a shortage of the capability to judge what AI produces. A separate AI module would teach the operation of the tools, which is the part participants did not describe as missing. What closes the gap is evaluation, and evaluation is exercised on design work rather than taught apart from it.

7.3 The place of AI in a course of study

The clearest value of AI was located in early-stage work, before a direction is fixed. Habitual use was held to erode creative confidence, willingness to experiment and understanding of the design process. Early-stage work is where those are built.

Section 3.4.4 records broad agreement that AI belongs inside existing design teaching rather than in a subject of its own. That agreement is about form, and it is compatible with introducing AI in the first weeks and equally compatible with withholding it until the second half of a degree. Early introduction with the risk managed, sequencing after foundations, deferral to the later years, and refusal of deferral because students already use AI are four different viewpoints. Nothing in the evidence reports any of them implemented and observed.

7.4 Independence and the terms of use

The concern raised most consistently is that using these tools changes the person using them. The losses named are creative confidence, willingness to experiment, tolerance for an unresolved problem, and understanding of the design process itself. It was raised by students about themselves and not only by teachers about students, and it extends past professional capability into how much decision-making people delegate to systems that know them well, and into the effect on relationships between people.

The consequence is that dependency is a design variable rather than a side effect. How often, at what point and under whose supervision a student uses AI are curriculum decisions with predictable effects, not matters of individual preference. This also sets a limit on the efficiency case, since the value participants identified is concentrated at exactly the stage where the capability at risk is built. A programme cannot take the gain and avoid the cost by adopting AI and hoping, and nothing here describes anyone having managed it.

7.5 Assessment and the capacity to deliver it

Assessment was described as a practice AI has made unreliable, and the response proposed was to assess the process rather than the artefact, through oral examination, in-class tasks, reflective explanation, comparison of process stages and review of prompt history. These could require more contact time and more individual judgement per student than marking a finished output.

The fix therefore depends on capacity the same discussions describe as absent, and two further conditions attach: open acknowledgement of AI use was treated as the precondition for assessing it at all, and one discussion recorded participants unwilling to acknowledge their reliance. Section 3.3.1 adds that where capability is purchased, a graded output may reflect the tool as much as the student. An assessment reform that does not state what it costs to run will not be adopted where teaching capacity is the binding constraint, which is the position across most of this evidence.

7.6 Conditions for integration

Four things were asked for consistently and are conditions rather than preferences. Access to the tools, meaning subscriptions and the capability behind a paywall, where absence means students work with weaker versions rather than without AI. Infrastructure, including secure environments for experimenting without exposing data or intellectual property. Institutional policy stating what acceptable use is, the absence of which leaves students uncertain what is permitted and staff deciding case by case. And continuing professional development rather than single events, tied directly to the pace at which the tools change. Assessment reform depends on staff capability, equitable access on licensing, and transparency on policy.

7.7 What the evidence does not settle

Two questions are contested. On what AI does to the standing of design expertise, the discussions divide between commodification with downward pressure on quality, and human judgement and manual skill becoming more valuable. The two imply different programmes, one preparing students for a market that no longer recognises what they know and one for a market in which it commands a premium, and Section 6.2 records that the split follows neither group size, nor session format, nor design fields. On prompting, three discussions treated it as a skill to be taught, one doubted it would remain one, and two held that prompting alone is not enough, including one of the three that teach it.

Three topics are thin rather than contested. Representational bias was discussed at length in one discussion only. The changing shape of design work was raised everywhere and developed nowhere, with a single statement anywhere about what employers now require. Environmental impact appears in contradictory forms and is developed in neither direction. The largest gap is practice: the focus groups produced accounts of what participants think, expect and fear, and no clear account of AI teaching in design education carried out and observed.

7.8 Concerns raised in the discussions and addressed in the conference practice

The conference poster material is the only evidence of practice in this report, and the practices it records address the same concerns the focus groups raised. Verification appears in the discussions as a requirement and in the posters as activities where students produce AI-supported work and then check accuracy, identify errors and compare outputs, with the checking built into the task. Authorship appears as uncertainty in the discussions and as teaching students to distinguish AI support from their own contribution in the posters. Over-reliance appears as a worry and as a topic taught alongside digital footprints, algorithmic influence and misinformation.

Accessibility runs the other way. The discussions treat it as who can afford the tools and, against that, as AI lowering the barrier of technical skill for people without formal training. The posters treat it as adapted materials for students with reading difficulties, speech delays and other learning barriers, which is a form of inclusion the design discussions do not reach.

The posters also show two positions the focus groups reached without acting on: the teacher retaining responsibility for accuracy, age-appropriateness and curriculum alignment while AI works as a planning assistant, and AI used inside a broader pedagogical design rather than as a stand-alone generator. This material is school-level teaching not focused on design specifically, so the content does not transfer.

7.9 The findings against the project's three intelligences

Table 3 sets the key findings against the three Intelligences introduced in Section 1.

Table 3 Findings and Points of Difference by Dimension of Intelligence

Dimensions of Intelligence	Themes	Key points	Points of differences
Intelligence of the Hand	3.1.2, 3.2.2, 3.4.3	Design knowledge acquired through making is what allows an AI output to be judged. Tests named include structural viability, garment construction, building regulation, climate and material suitability.	Whether AI raises or lowers the market standing of design expertise divides the evidence evenly and is not resolved.
Artificial Intelligence	3.1.1, 3.3.1, 3.3.3, 3.4.1, 3.4.2, 3.4.4	Accounts of current use, of where value is located, and of what participants mean by AI competence. Cost, licensing,	Whether prompting is a durable or a sufficient skill. The positions on when AI should enter a programme.

		institutional policy and teacher preparation are documented as conditions. AI is widely held to belong inside existing design teaching. Assessment was described as unreliable where a finished output no longer shows what a student can do, with process assessment proposed as the response.	
Social Intelligence	3.1.3, 3.2.1, 3.2.3, 3.2.4, 3.3.1, 3.3.2	Certain decisions must remain with a person, held in every discussion, as is the erosion of independent capability through habitual use. Ownership uncertainty and cost as a source of inequality between students are both widely raised, alongside the countervailing view that AI widens access to knowledge and lowers the barrier of technical skill.	Environmental impact appears in contradictory forms. Accessibility for learners with disabilities or learning differences appears only in the conference material.

7.10 Directions for the manifesto

The findings inform the development of the manifesto. What follows is what this evidence implies for a set of principles, and where it cannot support one:

- **Accountability and capability belong together.** That decisions must remain with a person is held in every discussion, as is the finding that the capability to make them is eroding. Asserting the first without the second states an obligation people may not be able to discharge.
- **The competence at stake is design competence, not tool competence.** The gap participants describe is in judging outputs rather than in operating systems, and what closes it is design knowledge acquired through making. A principle naming AI skills as a distinct capability alongside design skills would name the one thing this evidence does not identify as missing.
- **Verification is an obligation of competence, not attitude.** Instructing designers to check outputs is not actionable. What makes checking possible is design knowledge acquired through making, so the principle concerns maintaining that knowledge rather than vigilance.
- **The division of work can be stated in participants' own terms.** AI handling routine and data-heavy tasks while people direct strategic choices, ethical review and emotional resonance; human control at concept development and final decision.
- **Dependency is a curriculum decision.** How often and at what stage students use AI has predictable effects on the capability they develop. Naming over-reliance as a risk without treating pattern of use as something a programme decides leaves the risk with the student.
- **AI competence is built through practice.** AI education was held to work when practical, interdisciplinary and set inside real projects, with hands-on experimentation and guided reflection.
- **Transparency of use is a precondition.** Open acknowledgement was treated as the condition for teaching or assessing AI use at all, and one discussion found participants unwilling to acknowledge their reliance. A principle assuming disclosure without addressing how it is obtained assumes the problem away.
- **Access cuts both ways.** Unequal access to paid tools was widely described as producing unequal work, which bears directly on fair assessment. The same discussions held that AI widens access to knowledge and lowers the barrier of technical skill. A principle on access has to hold both.
- **The conditions for integration are institutional.** Tools, secure infrastructure, a stated position on acceptable use, and continuing staff development were asked for consistently. Each is a precondition for something else a manifesto is likely to commit to, and none is within the gift of an individual educator.

- **The legal position is unresolved.** The evidence supports a commitment to caution and to transparency about authorship. It does not supply an answer to the ownership question.

Four things this evidence cannot be used to support. Where the manifesto takes a position on any of them, the basis will have to come from elsewhere.

- **Whether AI raises or lowers the value of design expertise.** The evidence divides evenly and the split follows no visible line.
- **Prompting as a foundational skill.** Treated as a skill to be taught in three discussions and held to be insufficient on its own in two, including one of the three. Doubted in a fourth on the grounds that systems increasingly write prompts themselves and that students already use one system to prompt another.
- **When AI should enter a programme.** That AI belongs inside existing courses is widely held. When it arrives is not, and the positions are not variations of emphasis.
- **How judgement about meaning and cultural context is taught.** Participants held this to be the least substitutable human capability and said least about how it is developed. The evidence supports asserting that it matters and does not support any claim about how design education produces it.

7.11 Directions for the handbook

The findings also inform the development of the handbook. What follows is what this evidence points to in method and content, and the conditions any material drawn from it will meet.

Methods: The first four are adapted from the conference material.

- **Create then evaluate.** Students produce AI-supported work, then check accuracy, identify errors, compare outputs and reflect on quality. Process assessment made concrete, which the discussions asked for and did not describe.
- **State your own contribution.** Students account for what in the work is theirs, which addresses the authorship uncertainty raised throughout.
- **Prompting as a set of questions.** What is the goal, is privacy protected, is the information accurate and fair, can the student explain how AI was used. This could survive the objection that prompt-writing may not last.
- **Embedding rather than generating.** AI used inside a wider teaching design rather than as a stand-alone content generator.
- **Real projects rather than exercises.** AI competence developed inside interdisciplinary project work with structured reflection built in. Where AI shortens a production task, the time released can go to more project work and deeper critical analysis rather than be absorbed as saving.

- **Testing against material constraints.** AI proposals put against what can actually be made, so that an object that cannot be constructed becomes a question the student answers.
- **Protected room for experimentation.** Space to experiment, make mistakes and find a way through a problem. A course condition rather than an activity, and it limits where the other methods apply.
- **Students as creators rather than users.** The stronger conference contributions had students produce with AI rather than receive from it, which is what separated the practices that worked from those that did not.

Content:

- **The design capability that makes evaluation possible.** Sketching, observation, prototyping and iterative experimentation appear here as the means by which output is tested. Treating them as prerequisites rather than as AI content separates them from that purpose.
- **Critical evaluation of outputs**, which is where the discussions locate the competence gap. Recognising AI-generated material, and knowing the differences between systems well enough to choose between them by task, are components of it rather than separate skills.
- **Representational bias**, where the evidence supplies one usable piece of substance: attention concentrates on skin colour and gender while religious dress and wider cultural context receive less.
- **Regulatory and legal literacy**, supported by the only statement here about employer requirements, that organisations increasingly need people who understand both technological opportunity and regulatory responsibility.
- **Ethical reflection distributed through teaching** rather than delivered as a separate topic.
- **Digital citizenship**, taught in the conference practices as digital footprints, algorithmic influence, echo chambers, misinformation, over-reliance and authorship.
- **Differentiation and inclusion for learners with additional needs**, the only evidence in this report of accessibility addressed rather than described.

Conditions the handbook will meet.

- **Teacher preparation is a shortfall throughout** and keeping current is left to individuals. Material assuming prior training assumes what is missing.
- **Teaching capacity is the binding constraint.** A method that does not name what it costs in contact time will be adopted where capacity already exists and nowhere else.
- **The point of entry is unsettled.** Material assuming a stage at which AI arrives is assuming something the evidence does not establish.

- **Access to paid tools is unequal**, so methods requiring subscription-level capability will not run for every student.
- **Assessment was described as running ahead of teaching.** An assessment method separated from the teaching that makes it fair reproduces a problem participants named.
- **Teacher development was held to require continuity** rather than single events.

8 Conclusion

The evidence in this report comes from a focus group held in each of six European countries and from input gathered at a Pan-European conference on digital education. Three positions are held in every discussion. AI output cannot be used as it arrives and has to be checked against knowledge the system does not hold. Habitual use erodes the capability of the person using it. Certain decisions must remain with a person, which was a strong point of agreement among the discussions. Participants also described the competence that is missing as something other than familiarity with the tools, locating it in judgement, in critical evaluation and in understanding enough of the systems to know where they fail. On what follows for teaching, the widely held position is that AI belongs inside existing design teaching rather than in a subject of its own, integrated into courses and learning outcomes rather than left to individual lecturers. Where participants addressed how these competences should be developed, the argument was for practice rather than instruction: hands-on work, interdisciplinary projects and real briefs with real constraints, with reflection built into the task and transferable competences taught in preference to particular applications. Teacher preparation was described as a shortfall wherever institutional capacity was discussed, with keeping current left largely to individuals, and the requirement stated was continuing professional development rather than single training events.

The evidence divides on two questions that bear directly on what a design programme does. Whether AI raises or lowers the standing of design expertise splits it evenly, and the split follows neither group size, nor session format, nor the design fields represented. When AI should enter a course of study is contested in the same way, and the positions taken are different programmes rather than different emphases. Neither question is settled here. The largest absence is practice. Participants described what they expect, value and fear, and no discussion produced an account of AI teaching in design education that had been carried out and observed. The poster contributions to the conference are the only record of practice in this report, and that material comes from school-level teaching which is not exclusively focused on design education.

One consequence runs through the findings. The capability participants relied on to judge AI output is design capability acquired through making, and it is the same capability they described as eroding under habitual use. Formal responsibility for an output is not by itself a safeguard, since a person answerable for work they cannot test is accountable in name only. Craft and material knowledge appear here as the instrument by which output is tested rather than as something to be preserved alongside AI. A programme that treats AI integration as teaching students to operate the tools therefore addresses something other than the difficulty participants described. The conditions attached to integration are institutional rather than individual: access to the tools, secure infrastructure, a stated position on acceptable use, and the teacher development named above.

These findings pass to the manifesto and the handbook as a record of what design teachers, design students and industry practitioners said in 2026, and they carry the limits set out in Section 2.6. They support statements about what participants hold, about where the discussions agree and about where they do not. They do not support claims about design education across Europe. Their value is that what the project develops from here can be built on what these participants described rather than on assumptions about what design education needs.