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EDIDESK

Open Access Contents on Design for Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion for Higher Education Programmes

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Based on the visual identity of the EDIDesK Project

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STRATEGIC DESIGN RESEARCH JOURNAL

# Fostering Innovation in Design Education through Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

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## ABSTRACT

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) are key principles used today to innovate the Higher Education system in Europe, particularly Design programmes, where components of socially responsible and innovative Design Education are considered strategic. Within this framework, the EDIDesK Project (*Open Access Contents on Design for Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion for Higher Education Programmes*, Erasmus+ KA220-HED) aims to seek to propose innovative pathways to improve the teaching of Design for EDI at the level of European Higher Education system. The article, which introduces this Special Issue, examines the integration of Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) principles into higher education Design programmes in Europe. The study proposes the methodological setting used to map existing teaching practices, identify systemic challenges, and outline directions for embedding EDI more comprehensively within design curricula. The work, along with the collection of articles composing the Special Issue, argues for the need for structural reforms in Design Education. An emphasis is placed on interdisciplinary teaching, closer collaboration with stakeholders, and the recognition of EDI as a core competence for present students. Such measures are essential for preparing students to engage in inclusive, socially responsive, and future-oriented design practice.

*Keywords:* Design Education, Equality, Diversity, Inclusion, EDI.

## INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt that the present times are characterized by evident frictions that impact humans and their social dimensions in many ways. Along with the constant attention to human-ecosystem interactions, which directly relate to sustainability-related issues, the challenges posed by pressing social instances such as global demographics, geopolitical tensions, economic inequalities, migrations, and the evolved idea of human diversity prioritize the concepts of Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) as one of the most pressing issues to address. This trend is evident within both scientific and professional communities working in Design studies, where there is an imperative to provide answers to important questions like "in a socially exclusive era, what solutions should be created to meet the new human needs?", "how solutions designed around the concepts of EDI look like?", etc.

When compared to the current panorama of industrial productions, it can be said that the global design industry has already started to make initial attempts by including the EDI principles into commercial products (Holmes, 2018). For example, recent digital services

enable all users to access a wide range of products by using accessible interfaces and user-friendly delivery systems, innovative manufacturing technologies have improved the capability of SMEs to provide solutions for many user groups, including vulnerable ones, while reducing the cost of productions; co-design research tools for co-creation are used by public organisations. As the global design industry evolves, the EDI principles gain recognition for their critical role in fostering innovation, creativity, and socially responsible design practices. In a scenario that needs for mature cultural approaches and inclusive products, designers can enable effective actions to contrast potentially disabling conditions driven by mere profit-based pushes.

Designers play a fundamental role (Cross, 2006). Indeed, when correctly trained to address EDI-related issues, they can be considered creators of value for several organisations, both industrial and public. This because when launched into markets, inclusive solutions that fully comply with EDI principles are perceived as having higher value – an inclusive solution that is equitable provides opportunities to be used regardless of exogenous barriers (everyone can have at least one fair opportunity to access it); when designed to meet human diversity, an inclusive solution can be seen as suitable for all humans (flexibility in use regardless of users' physical or cognitive limitations as well as ability in fulfilling a task); when designed with final users, an inclusive solution shows higher value and meaning for consumers (i.e., goal-oriented design and research-through-design versus function-oriented or performance-based design). The more designers are educated to deal with EDI – training on Design for EDI – the more industrial products will be capable to overcome the emerging social issues.

However, integrating EDI into Design Education remains a complex challenge that requires more than just a theoretical understanding. It demands the Higher Education system to operate a significant restructuring of how future designers are educated to act responsibly and ethically (Rossi & Brischetto, 2024). At the same time, EDI does not merely mean designing to contrast negative aspects or solving problems. It is believed that a "searching for opportunities" mindset can be central to this effort and should be employed to ensure high-quality education – a core principle promoted by the Sustainable Development Goal 4. A deeper and more intentional focus on preventing biased actions while creating equitable opportunities can help to achieve this goal in Design Education. That is to say that Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) can play a pivotal role in translating the EDI-oriented teaching and learning frameworks into practical pedagogical strategies so that at the end of educational careers, students are more prepared to address the increasingly diverse needs of future society.

The opportunities raised by EDI, and its potential impact on the quality of future commercial productions of industrial products, both physical and digital, reveal interesting openings for the Design Education sector (Julier, 2013), which however is called to promptly answer to the fast-growing forces coming from the society. Despite the clear market requests, only recently Design schools are showing interest in integrating EDI concepts into undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. Considering the multifaceted scenario of approaches and cultural advances, the delivery of teaching contents on "Design for EDI" is generally fragmented and not uniform with standards (e.g., design contents, studio settings, teaching and learning practices, evaluation strategies, staff training, etc.). In addition to that, cultural barriers, biased contents delivered to students, and the lack of networking among Design schools further limit the creation of a shared culture on Design for EDI. This means that the entire Design Education

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sector can easily miss the chance to adopt new teaching avenues to progress the field, establishing knowledge terrains needed by graduates to tackle emerging market issues.

The EDIDesK project – "Open Access Contents on Design for Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion for Higher Education Programmes" – is a European Erasmus+ cooperation project among higher education institutions that aims at improving the teaching of Design for EDI within the European's Higher Education system (Design Education in the European territory) (EDIDesK, 2023). It aspires to improve the European economy in terms of readiness to inclusivity and sustainability by accelerating the development of Design students' cultural, technical, and digital skills on Design and EDI. The project involves five European universities and two NGOs; all project partners have proven track record of excellence in the field of Design studies.

EDIDesK was born with the clear intention to overcome some of the above-mentioned barriers that several Design schools experience when confronting the challenges posed by EDI in different fields, mainly at the teaching and learning level of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. These include biased information useful for setting up a design culture and to preparing lectures, reference models for teaching and learning, suitable vocabulary of terms, replicable models for effective learning (e.g., correct use of Universal Design for Learning), etc. To overcome these pre-identified barriers, the EDIDesK project is working to achieve four ambitious goals. Specifically:

1. To map undergraduate and postgraduate modules delivering EDI-related design topics in order to provide elements to understand the current scenario of teaching and learning in Design studies.
2. To propose a European framework for teaching Design for EDI, to be applied to both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes.
3. To design and develop an open access digital learning platform to collect and share multilanguage teaching materials on Design for EDI.
4. To develop a first set of open access teaching contents on Design for EDI for different sectors and suitable for both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes.
5. To promote open collaboration among scholars and Design schools, to overcome regionalisms and biased contents on Design for EDI.

All these goals shape a challenging pathway to trigger an initial but significant change in the status quo of Design Education, when confronted with EDI. While the pressure of providing students with high-quality contents is still paramount, the project approaches a present horizontal priority for Design students to improve their market readiness on topics that will be crucial soon.

This volume of the Strategic Design Research Journal (SDRJ) collects the early research results of the EDIDesK project and developed in the Work Package 2 "Research and analysis of teaching contents on Design and EDI". It collects seven high-quality contributions made by EDIDesK's project partners exploring the explicit and hidden aspects of teaching EDI in Design studies in some European countries. Specifically, the Work Package 2 aimed at defining, within the context of Design studies in the Higher Education sector, existing practices and tools used to develop contents on Design for EDI as well as investigations on inclusive teaching models and suitable technologies to create inclusive learning environments. The second part of this introductory manuscript provides clear evidence and information about the methodology

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used in this research activity. If significant structural transformations can start only by critically reflecting on existing practices made at regional and national level, the research results shown in the articles composing this volume provide readers with clear elements for deeper understanding of multifaced aspects related to Design and EDI in different countries. Specifically, seven articles will be presented. The intention is to present and critically analyse the current state of art from which later to operate effective improvements.

The first article of this volume discusses the pedagogical advances offered by EDI in Design Education. In an era where societal values are rapidly evolving, Design Education stands at the forefront of cultural transformation, embracing the EDI principles. This article delves into the pedagogical innovations birthed from EDI initiatives, synthetically exploring how they revolutionize teaching methodologies, curriculum development, and student engagement in design programs.

A group of four articles delve into the contexts of EDI in Design Education, mainly in Italy, Poland, Slovakia, and Spain. These articles contain the main research results developed in the EDIDesK's Work Package 2 and show phenomenological analyses made in the countries where EDIDesK has concentrated its efforts. These works, independently written by autonomous research units, also contain critical analyses mixing qualitative and quantitative data. The third part of this introductory manuscript synthetically introduces the main findings discussed in these articles.

A sixth article introduces the result of an extensive survey on EDI-related design methods and tools for content delivery. This work delves into the critical analysis and comparison of tools used by the academic community to teach EDI in Design and Design-related programmes. It also provides useful metrics and comparisons to understand pros and cons, as well as limits and opportunities for each entry collected.

Finally, a conclusive article focuses on the importance of EDI in educational institutions and broader societal contexts. The article is jointly written by representatives of NGOs involved in the EDIDesK project and emphasizes how EDI frameworks can enhance creativity, foster innovation, and promote social justice within academic environments, while also benefiting society at large.

Through a collection of themed studies, the articles composing this volume explore innovative pedagogical practices, curriculum strategies, and broader implications of EDI in Design Education as a practice useful for cultivating designers capable of producing inclusive and forward-thinking design solutions. By bringing together diverse perspectives and strategic outlooks, the volume intends to be a valuable resource for educators, practitioners, and students.

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## 1. RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS OF TEACHING CONTENTS ON DESIGN AND EDI

As said, this research activities performed in the Work Package 2 were aimed at identifying and analysing current practices and methodologies for integrating EDI into Design Education at the Higher Education level. It explored inclusive teaching models and technologies that support equitable and accessible learning environments. To ensure a comprehensive and coherent approach, the research was divided into two complementary parts (Figure 1). Part 1 – "Research and Analysis of Teaching Content on Design and EDI" – focused on examining how

EDI principles are embedded in Design and Design-related programmes. The study was conducted in four countries – Poland, Italy, Slovakia, and Spain – and structured into three main stages. The first stage consisted of desk research aimed at identifying modules that integrate EDI into their curricula. This phase facilitated the mapping and preliminary evaluation of promising modules across the selected countries. The second stage involved in-depth interviews with academics responsible for delivering high-quality EDI-content modules. These interviews provided qualitative insights into pedagogical strategies, underlying values and the practical tools employed in the teaching process. Part 2 – "Digital and Traditional Teaching and Learning Methodologies for Design and Design-Related Programmes" – focused on the comparative analysis of educational tools and methods. Its objective was to benchmark both digital and traditional teaching strategies, evaluating their effectiveness, scope of application, level of complexity, and relevance to EDI-related subjects. The analytical framework developed in this phase also shaped the interviews in Part 1, ensuring consistency between exploring teaching content and evaluating delivery methods. Together, the two parts formed a coherent research framework: Part 1 analysed curricula and academic practices, while Part 2 critically assessed pedagogical tools and learning environments supporting EDI integration.

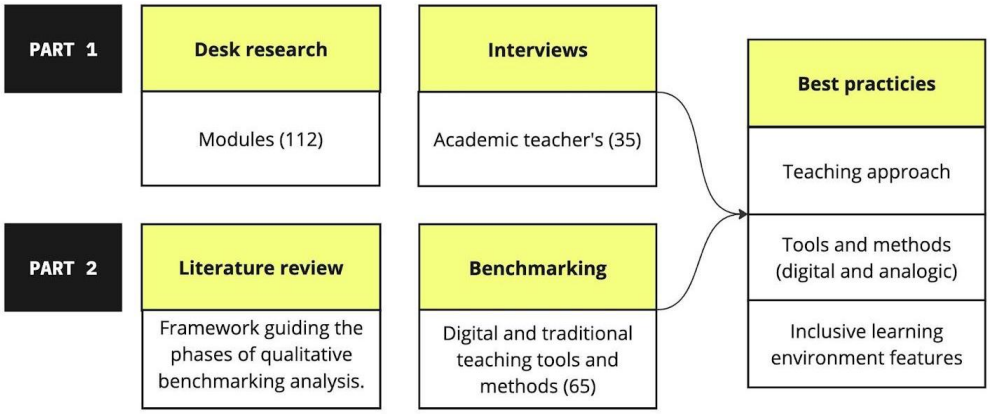


Figure 1. The framework of research plan.

## 1.1. Methodology used in Part 1: Common language and structure

Each research unit conducted a national-level desk-based research, selected interviewees, collected data, and contributed to the cross-country analysis. To ensure consistency, a key objective was to establish a shared understanding of terminology, taxonomy, and methodological approaches across partners, aligning curricula structures, teaching practices, and EDI interpretations. The process began with defining EDI not only as a set of values but also in terms of its practical application in curricula, design practices, and broader social contexts. This common framework guided all subsequent research activities. Table 1 presents an example – a condensed summary of EDI components, highlighting key categories and their relevance to education.

An analysis of national curricula helped establish a shared understanding of subject types across universities. Following consultation, the EDIDesK consortium defined a set of module types (Figure 2), representing the full educational path – from foundational courses like Basic Design, through theoretical subjects, to design and diploma studios where the complete design process is practiced.

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Table 1: EDI Definition applied to Design Education.

| EDI Components | Design Topics | T&L Approaches | Educational Environment |
|---|---|---|---|
| Equality | Designing for fair access to artefacts and services; considering how design enables or limits access. | Equal delivery of content and support, regardless of learners' backgrounds or abilities. | Fair treatment and access for all – teachers and learners; equal opportunity to participate, express opinions, and be assessed fairly, regardless their background, belief, etc.. |
| Diversity | Designing for human diversity (cultural, gender, disability, etc.) and its impact on quality of life. | Teaching tailored to the needs of learners with diverse (dis)abilities, including inclusive adaptations of content and tools that empower all students. | Equal access, participation, and engagement in all aspects of academic and community life for all individuals, regardless of (dis)ability, race, gender, or other differences, within a discrimination-free learning environment. |
| Inclusion | Involving users in the design process (e.g., co-design); addressing needs of marginalized groups. | Co-created content; learners seen as peers and collaborators. | Shared responsibility in shaping learning spaces; all voices valued; diversity seen as an asset. |

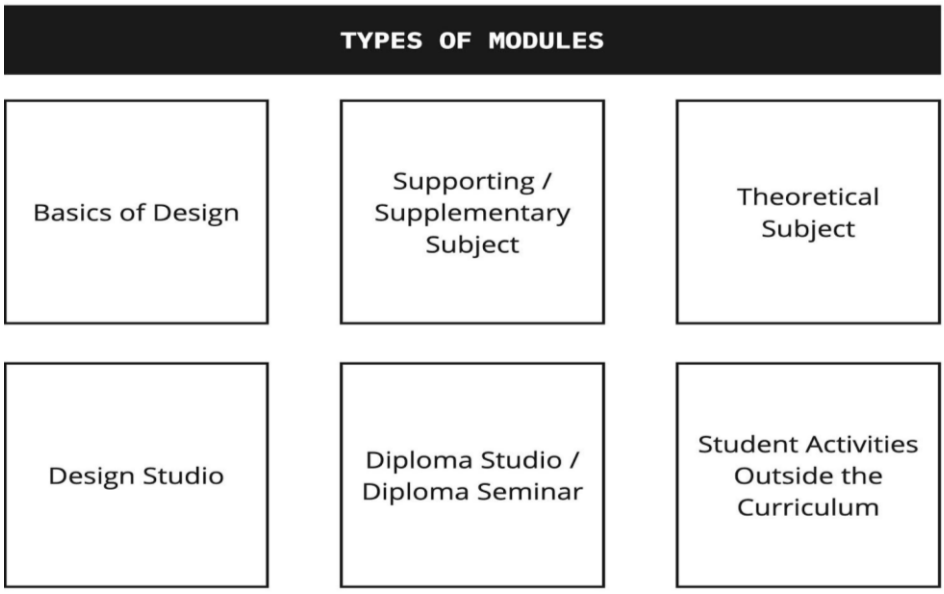


Figure 2. Types of modules.

Each module was analysed for its formal characteristics as well as the cultural depth and nature of EDI integration. For this evaluation, an "EDI Integration Scale" was developed, enabling the categorization of modules based on the degree to which EDI principles were embedded in both curriculum content and student outcomes. The scale ranges from minimal inclusion to comprehensive integration, including collaboration with external EDI stakeholders (Table 2).

Table 2: EDI Integration Scale.

| EDI Contents Level | Description |
|---|---|
| Level 1 | The programme covers selected EDI issues. |
| Level 2 | The programme covers selected EDI issues, and some student work includes EDI issues. |
| Level 3 | The programme covers selected EDI issues, and most of the student work includes EDI issues. |
| Level 4 | The programme covers selected EDI issues, and most of the student work includes EDI issues, and cooperation with an external partner around EDI is carried out. |
| Level 5 | The programme focuses entirely on EDI, and all student work carried out addresses EDI issues. |

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After establishing a shared framework, a structured database was developed to collect consistent and comparable data during the desk research phase (Figure 3). Based on this, the interview structure was jointly designed, with partners agreeing on core questions addressing teaching methods, tools, EDI understanding, and related competencies (Figure 4). This methodology ensured coherence across research partners and provided a solid foundation for identifying best practices in EDI education.

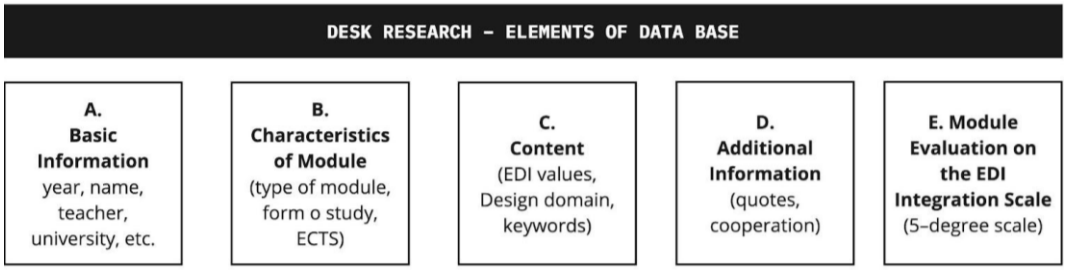


Figure 3. Structure of the desk research database – categories of collected information.

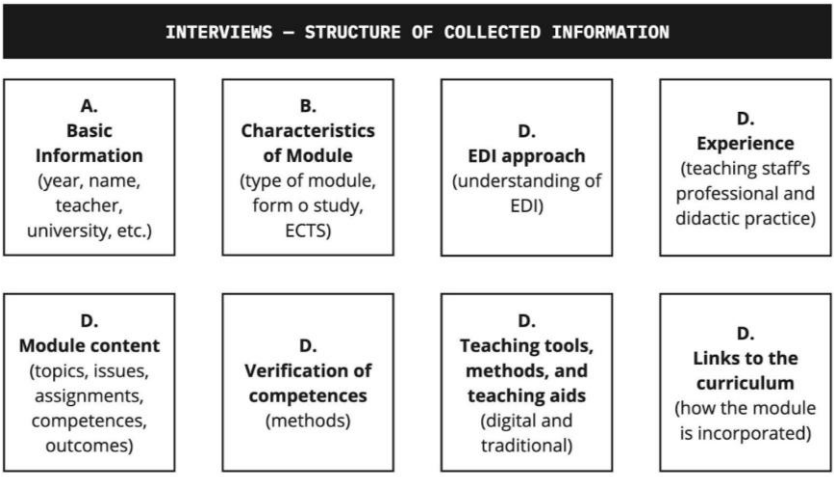


Figure 4. Structure of the desk research database – categories of collected information.

As a result, 112 modules were analysed. Most scored 3 on the EDI Integration Scale, with 32 scoring 4–5 and 24 scoring 2. The database includes various module types, with EDI content embedded across theoretical and practical approaches at different educational levels. Module emphasis varies by country (Figure 5) and spans 19 design domains – from General Design to fields like Interior Design and Digital Product Design – reflecting regional diversity (Figure 6).

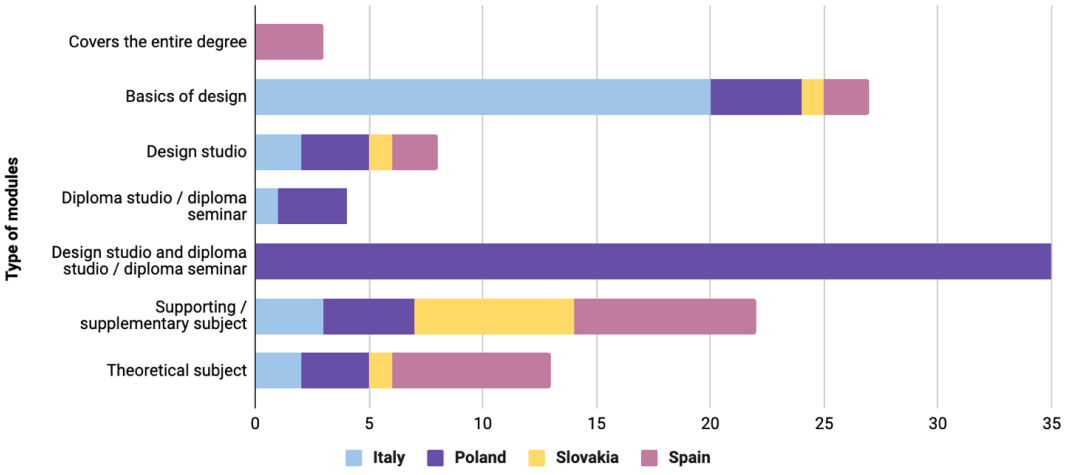


Figure 5. Chart illustrating the quantitative distribution of identified modules by type.

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Figure 6. WordCloud created from the list of keywords that describe the program modules (created using: https://www.jasondavies.com/wordcloud/).

The interviews reveal that modules aimed to raise students' awareness of applying EDI in design practice, some focusing on specific aspects (e.g., accessibility, social factors like gender, age, economic background). Academics emphasized that EDI is intrinsic to Design studies through user-centered research and contextual analysis. The findings highlight the EDI's multifaceted nature in Design Education, where key competencies include empathy, active listening, flexibility, feedback responsiveness, goal-oriented thinking, team communication, and the ability to present and frame design from the user's perspective (Figure 7).

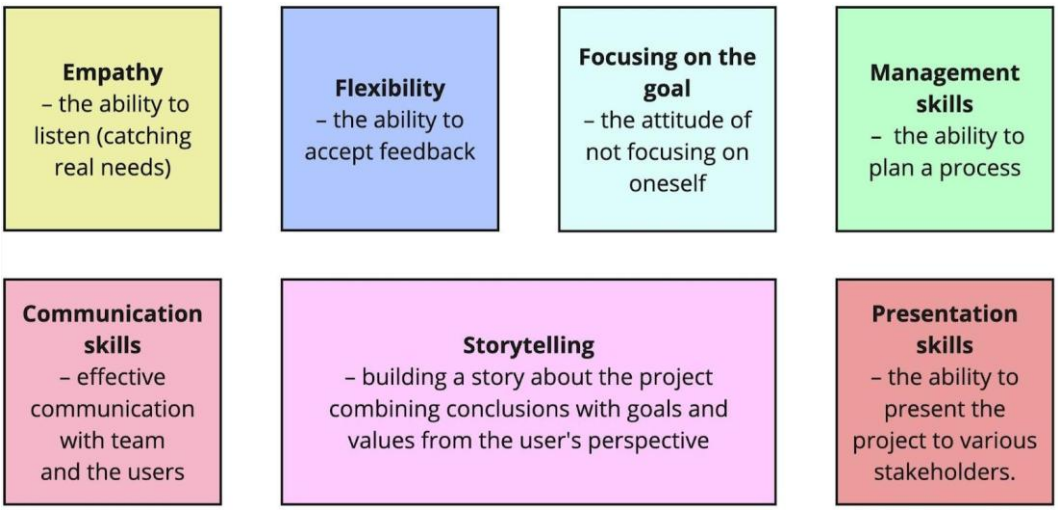


Figure 7. Competencies supporting the EDI approach in the design process, as identified by teachers during interviews.

## 1.2. Methodology used in Part 2: Stages and consistency

Part 2 aimed to identify suitable digital as well as analog teaching tools and methodologies for integrating EDI into Design and Design-related programmes at Higher Education level. Objectives included defining the scientific framework of EDI in Design, mapping existing tools and methods, assessing their use in educational and design processes, and exploring new technologies' potential for inclusive and collaborative learning. To achieve this, a structured methodology was applied, starting with a literature review (e.g., Scopus, Google Scholar, year range: 2010–2024) on EDI in Design Education, which identified key trends and gaps and

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provided a solid conceptual foundation, followed by systematic benchmarking of inclusive teaching tools and methodologies.

Building on insights from the literature, the benchmarking focused on toolkits, methodologies, pedagogical approaches, and institutional guidelines. The goal was to evaluate their accessibility, effectiveness, and educational relevance. A comprehensive mapping was conducted across three key domains which become in the end a three individual data base: (1) Toolkits, methodologies, approaches, and tools for EDI (analogic and digital), (2) Tools/teaching methodologies and guidelines for EDI and database, (3) Digital environments and tools supporting inclusive education. A structured set of indicators was applied to ensure clarity, objectivity, and relevance in assessing each resource (Figure 8). Together, they provide a foundational resource for analysing and developing inclusive teaching practices in Design Education.

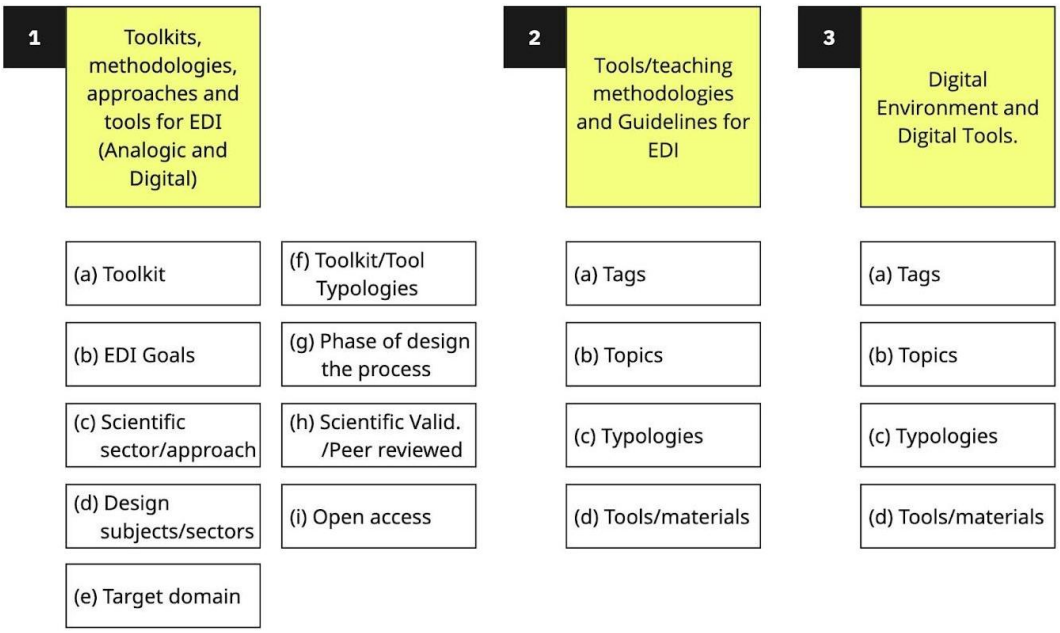


**Figure 8. Structure of the compiled database: Descriptive categories.**

The benchmarking results revealed that although EDI is increasingly acknowledged, its integration into Design Education methods remains limited. The analysis showed that most tools and teaching strategies are grounded in frameworks such as Human Centered Design, Design Thinking, Inclusive Design, and Universal Design. While only a few resources directly addressed EDI, many promoted related concepts like empathy, usability, co-creation, and accessibility. Database 1 included 31 tools, of which 26 were explicitly EDI-related. Most were focused on practical aspects of inclusive design, particularly in participatory and user-focused approaches. Database 2 contained 11 resources dealing with curriculum flexibility, open educational practices, and accessibility in content delivery. Database 3 featured 22 digital tools designed to support inclusive learning environments, including user interface design aids, collaborative platforms, and open-source software.

This two-part research approach provided a structured and comparative overview of how EDI is addressed in Design Education across different undergraduate and postgraduate curricula, pedagogical methods, and learning environments. The findings serve as a foundation for future development of inclusive, effective teaching models, and tools that align with the principles of EDI in Design and Design-related fields.

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## 2. EDI IN DESIGN EDUCATION: NATIONAL PERSPECTIVES AND CRITICAL REFLECTIONS

The work done in the EDIDesK project clearly demonstrates that the integration of EDI principles into the Higher Education system of Design Education represents an increasingly urgent challenge across European educational systems. The EDIDesK project is providing a first attempt to address this issue through a multi-level comparative study aimed at mapping curricular contents, pedagogical methods, and teaching tools in four national contexts – Italy, Poland, Slovakia, and Spain. The analysis performed in the Work Package 2 considered 112 design modules and assessed how each country incorporates EDI themes within its higher education design programmes. The findings produced by EDIDesK's research units, and included in this volume, offer a comparative and critical interpretation of national approaches, highlighting shared trajectories, divergences, and opportunities for improvement.

The work of D'Onofrio, Cipressi, and Massacesi depicts the analysis performed in Italy. Specifically, the Italian dataset comprises 28 modules from 6 universities (10 undergraduate modules, 18 postgraduate ones), mostly at the postgraduate level. The work of the authors clearly shows how the teaching and learning approach to EDI in Italy is primarily technical and functional, with emphasis on Universal Design, accessibility, and Ergonomics (HFE). Recurrent terminology includes "Design for All" and "User-Centred Design," reflecting an inclusion model oriented toward usability. However, concepts such as intersectionality, structural inequity, or socio-cultural diversity are scarcely addressed. Data presented confirm that while instructors show awareness of EDI principles, these often address physical impairments, rather than exploring the structural dimensions of exclusion – for which unbiased knowledge on EDI is paramount. Stakeholder involvement is minimal, with only one module involving collaboration with a local NGO. Overall, EDI content is rarely included in foundational courses, reinforcing its perception as a specialised rather than core competence.

The work of Więckowska and Rudnicka presents the analysis in Poland. Polish design education is informed by a strong ethical tradition, shaped in part by post-socialist pedagogical narratives and figures such as Andrzej Pawłowski, who envisioned design as a socially responsible and morally engaged discipline. The study reviewed 52 modules (25 at undergraduate level, 19 at postgraduate level, 7 delivered both at undergraduate and postgraduate level, and 1 in a non-degree programme) from 8 public academies. It can be observed that EDI principles appear more systematically embedded compared to the Italian case, particularly within academically oriented institutions – higher percentage of modules that have reached levels 4 or 5 out 5 in the qualitative assessment. Higher degree of integration was observed in studio-based and diploma modules, particularly in terms of accessibility, user engagement, and diversity. However, equality is rarely addressed, while systemic or intersectional concerns are underdeveloped. The Polish model stands out for its methodological innovation: EDI topics are often explored through practice-based learning, collaborative formats, and student-led initiatives. Additionally, European-funded programmes such as *Accessibility Plus* and *Universal Design* have promoted EDI integration through infrastructure and curricular reforms.

Čerešňová et al. discusses an interesting picture of modules related to EDI in Slovakia. Although numerically limited (only 10 modules, 5 at undergraduate level and 5 at postgraduate level), the Slovakian sample features some of the most advanced pedagogical approaches in the study. The Faculty of Architecture and Design at the Slovak University of Technology (FAD STU) in Bratislava hosts the Centre of Design for All (CEDA), a teaching and

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research hub that offers a comprehensive model for EDI integration. Courses such as 'Universal Design', 'Body Conscious Design', and 'Humanization of Microenvironment' employ multisensory and empathic teaching and learning methods, including physical simulations, environmental audits, and mobile eye-tracking. These modules adopt the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework, promoting inclusive engagement, diverse modes of representation, and learner autonomy. Notably, students are involved in applied projects in partnership with municipalities and NGOs, demonstrating the social relevance and real-world impact of EDI integration. Despite the small size of samples recorded, the Slovakian case offers valuable references for interdisciplinary and user-centred education.

Finally, Carrasco Parodi and Menichinelli portrays the analysis conducted on module in Spain by considering Catalonia and the city of Barcelona. The geographical area emerged as a leader in inclusive policymaking related to urban planning, gender-sensitive spatial design, and accessibility. Since the 1980s, legislative frameworks and bottom-up movements have consolidated intersectional approaches in public design. However, this progressive policy environment has yet to translate into coherent pedagogical practice. The Spanish study originally reviewed 113 programmes (79 undergraduate and 34 postgraduate); after excluding those with insufficient documentation, only 22 were ultimately retained (17 undergraduate modules, 3 postgraduate modules, and 2 non-degree modules), of which only 5 (4.4%) reached levels 4 or 5 out 5 in the qualitative assessment. While dedicated institutions and research centres exist, their influence on curriculum design remains limited. One contributing factor is the relatively recent academic accreditation of Design as an autonomous discipline (2010), which necessitated structural adaptation and regulatory alignment. Some integration of EDI is evident in programmes related to urban and social design, yet substantial gaps remain in aligning public policy, curriculum innovation, and faculty development.

The cross-national analysis reveals both common patterns and divergent features. Table 3 provides a summary of six key indicators across the four national contexts. Poland has a strong foundation in core courses, emphasizing an ethical-educational approach rooted in social design with moderate involvement of stakeholders. Slovakia, though analysing fewer modules, shows promising integration through an experiential and methodological approach, with relatively good engagement of external stakeholders. Italy and Spain display a more limited EDI presence, with weak stakeholder collaboration and minimal integration in foundational courses. Italy's focus leans toward technical-functional aspects, while Spain reflects a political-institutional framing, often tied to feminism and accessibility. Overall, the data suggests that while EDI integration is gaining ground, it remains inconsistent and underdeveloped in many contexts, particularly in foundational design education and stakeholder involvement.

The research performed confirms that, although EDI is increasingly recognised as a priority in contemporary Design studies, its integration into Higher Education systems remains inconsistent. Shared challenges are evident: EDI is often included in specialised or postgraduate courses rather than embedded across curricula as a transversal competence. The integration of EDI is frequently fragmented, with limited attention to intersectionality or to its application in foundational teaching. Gender, race, disability, and socio-cultural diversity are still rarely addressed in a systemic way.

Table 3: Comparative data by country.

| Country | Modules Analyzed | EDI Modules at Level 4-5 | % EDI Modules at Level 4-5 | Dominant Approach | External Stakeholders | EDI in Foundational Courses |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Italy (including Republic of San Marino) | 28 | 6 | 21.4% | Technical-functional (HCD, DFA, UD, Accessibility) | Weak | Limited |
| Poland* | 52 | 17 | 32.7% | Ethical-educational (Social Design) | Moderate | Good |
| Slovakia | 10 | 4 | 40% | Experiential and methodological (UDL, empathy) | Good | Rare |
| Spain | 22 | 5 | 22,7% | Political-institutional (feminism, accessibility) | Weak | Very limited |
| Total | 112 | 32 | 28.5% (average) | | | |

Note: * Some of the modules are offered at both the undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

Legend of Integration Levels:
Level 1: No presence (EDI is absent or irrelevant).
Level 2: Minimal presence (general references without curricular impact).
Level 3: Present in content (not in teaching practice).
Level 4: Partial integration (content + some methods).
Level 5: Full integration (content, methods, evaluation, stakeholders).

However, significant differences persist and shape national identities. Poland demonstrates widespread and methodologically innovative integration, strongly supported by public funding and participatory methods. Conversely, Italy applies a technically oriented approach that lacks structural or institutional anchoring. Spain benefits from a progressive policy landscape yet fails to translate these advantages into consistent pedagogical outcomes. Despite its limited size, Slovakia sets a high benchmark for holistic, experiential education practices. One of the major obstacles remains the absence of a coherent European policy framework to guide and assess EDI integration in Design Education. On this matter, the contribution made by the EDIDesK project stands as a urgent action to discover structural criticalities, and later, to cover the gaps in Design Education. While the diversity of educational traditions is enriching, the lack of common reference points limits mutual learning and the scalability of successful practices. Without structured tools for training, curriculum reform, and institutional support, EDI risks being treated as an optional rather than foundational aspect of design education.

In this context, the EDIDesK project provides a strategic platform to bridge systemic gaps. By facilitating cross-national dialogue and highlighting the most effective models, the project offers valuable insights for constructing a shared European space for Inclusive Design Education. Accordingly, four key recommendations emerge:

1. Establish EDI as a foundational competence across all levels of Design Education – the promotion of EDI in the early years of undergraduate programmes can promote consistent learning to be gradually reinforced over time.

2. Promote interdisciplinary and practice-based pedagogies that integrate critical theory with user-centred methods.

3. Implement structural reforms in teacher training, curriculum standards, and institutional governance to support EDI. One of the main findings achieved by the project so far concerns the critical role played by teaching staff, who act as a bridge between knowledge bodies and learners – biased information delivered to students often comes from untrained staff.

4. Strengthen collaborations with external stakeholders, including NGOs, public agencies, and marginalised communities. As evinced by interviews and methods considered, live academic projects that connect Design students with real-life situations is an effective means to promote consistent learning on EDI.

Ultimately, a genuine shift toward inclusive education demands a transformation in mindset – EDI must no longer be treated as an isolated add-on, but as a core value for Design Education that informs the pedagogical, cultural, and institutional foundations of Design. Embracing EDI as a strategic framework for Design studies can empower future generation of designers to engage meaningfully with the complexities of contemporary society, advancing both democratic participation and social justice through the lens of Design.

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