

Report: Online International Stakeholder Meeting 18/12/2018

On the 18th of December 2018, AEuCC team led the online international stakeholder meeting of the Cerasmus+ project, with the aim to **discuss the results of the questionnaire about the training needs of the ceramics sector**¹.

The participants were:

- Giuseppe Olmeti (AEuCC)
- Viola Emaldi (AEuCC)
- Elisa Emiliani (AEuCC)
- Oriol Calvo (AeCC)
- José Luis Silva (AptCC)
- Monika Gass (former Director of Keramikmuseum Westerwald)

According to the assessment needs questionnaire, the **most valued skills** are “Artistic and Craft” (report p.12) and between these skills, the most valued are the “Craft skills”; among the “Professional skills”, the most valued are “Technical skills” (report p.13); “Relationship management” are the top scored skills among “Functional Skills” (report p.15).

The most valued transversal skills pointed out are: “Focus on the ability to maintain an active business”; “Relevance of taking care of relationships with suppliers and customers”; “Communication and Teamwork, importance of cooperation”.

All “Technical” and “Working with Pressure” skills scored more than 4 out of 5. None of the “Technological” and “Innovation related” skills, “Pedagogical management” skills, “Information analysis” and “Management” scored more than 4 out of 5.

In the online meeting, which goal was to discuss the training needs of the ceramics sector in order to develop work-based-learning curricula, we kept into consideration that the following skills were highly valued in the assessment needs questionnaire:

- The ability to define the product the client is asking for;
- The skills related to the production of a quality product;
- The importance of the creative solution of problems;
- The abilities of Teamwork and Service orientation.

In the online meetings we discussed 3 topics:

- Topic 1 - Tradition and Innovation;
- Topic 2 - Urban environment;
- Topic 3 - Business start-ups.

¹ Download: [Transnational report on the training needs in the ceramics sector](#)

Topic 1 - Tradition and Innovation

Objective: to keep together tradition and innovation (i.e. 3D printing, Photoshop for industrial tiles lines).

From the assessment of training needs emerged that Innovation skills (such as 3D printing for both plastic and ceramics; Photoshop etc.) are not considered a priority. What are your considerations about this point? What is the use that you do of these innovative tools? To what extent do you use innovative tools in your work?

José Luis Silva: Portugal has developed 3D printing in the 80s, but now they prefer hand-work because it is more valuable in the market. In the new fairs, the approach of the buyers is handmade, they don't appreciate automatise pieces. The importance of unicity is connected to the commercial value of the product. Differently from China, we have to focus on quality rather than quantity.

Monika Gass: In teaching ceramics, you need a chariot, you need to know where you want to go. Many young people in Germany, starting a business, are failing because they miss the vision. We should have a clear view, make the people ready even if they are not 100% skilled. In this sense, the quality and the duration of the study is very important. There are many skills that should be taught today in order to form new ceramists (designer, makers). Firstly, It is important to learn that ceramics is an old material that cannot be taken out from its tradition. Also, technical skills are needed applied to computers, like the use of 3d printers and graphic/design programs like photoshop etc.

She points out the importance of knowing how to present oneself and promoting products through storytelling, video-making and portfolio. The importance of writing a correct CV.

Oriol Calvo: In Spain there is a distinction between production and education. Production: they lost a lot of businesses in the last 30 years, when many ceramics started to come from Asian countries for example. Now there are few businesses, but very linked to the tradition, they lost a big part of their market so they are reducing production. It is difficult to innovate and find a new market in the medium class and people who are living in the cities, because traditional production is more lined to rural areas. They need to innovate. And here we go to the other side of the problem: they learn the skills at home, from their parents, which is bad because they are skilled in doing ceramics but not in thinking about the market, design, digital skills etc. What happens in schools? Two problems: in the last 20 years nobody wanted to go to ceramics school. Also, the teachers are artists, which is a problem because the factories need very skilled people in commercial/industrial production cannot find people with technical skills. Now more people want to learn ceramics, but the teachers are still teaching artistic skills.

We need a new approach, starting from a marketing research that will define the client request and the production target, in order to produce what the market need. In this way, he points out the importance of the touristic sector. It could be interesting to design and product new



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souvenirs, with high level quality and traditional identity.



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Topic 2 - Urban Environment

Objective: to improve the valorisation of urban environment through ceramics craft with reference to methodologies for enhance networking between VET and ceramic craft industry.

Urban environment can be considered as the first big example of tradition updated with innovation. Because we have an high request for functionality and technical competences (e.g. because of weather, environmental sustainability etc.), and on the other side it provides a strong identity to the community. Working on the urban environment is also playful for pedagogical projects, as the design part can be done at school, and the production and application can be done by the industry (you project a prototype at school by VET and then translated industrially). It is also very challenging for students and new potters to think new functional elements for the city, new ways of living our outdoor spaces, because we are more and more outside our homes, so we need more and different tools, not just benches or lamps, but for example modular elements to define a space, an activity.

Special attention could be given to people with fewer opportunities (e.g. reduces sight). Another function of ceramics in urban environment is the one applied to architecture (functional elements of decorative elements), in the way that traditionally, ceramics has been part of an architectural style that marks most part of our cities in Europe (e.g Portugal, Poland, Romania etc.). Ceramics has always been part of the urban environment. So we can also work in this way, renewing tradition thanks to contemporary design and technologies that allow us to conceive and produce a great variety/range of ceramics elements, crafted or produced industrially.

José Luis Silva: In Portugal they produce for the whole market, design for the world, exportation. The urban ceramics is for a small part of the market. It is important for the internal market. In general, i believe in the importance of developing Design projects, particularly for objects (tableware) and tiles (azulejos) production.

Monika Gass: We have to teach people to find ideas and understand what they want to do, for example for tourists. The production that can be done for tourism is important for cities, we have to pay attention that it doesn't fall into gadget. Also, it happens that the technical competences are lost. The urban environment could also be a challenge to improve the forgotten skills. Also, urban environment can be considered as a theme for Erasmus projects around ceramic.

Viola Emaldi: Tourism could be another training, because it is important for many countries.

Oriol Calvo: Wants to point out that ceramics is applied to architecture and public space, there are many opportunities and could work more in this field. Ceramics is very cheap, coloured and good for resistance in open spaces. The examples of applications are so many: from public art to suburban stations, in architecture and decorations..and this kind of use



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describes also our identity.

About touristic souvenirs production: he agrees that we need to make good pieces, not as chinese.



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Topic 3 - Business start-ups

Objective: to improve the support for **ceramics craft business start-up** with reference to the protection of the EU traditional heritage, and of the strengthening and modernization of the ceramic sector value.

Let's consider firstly that the investment needed for a start-up changes between works of services and production. Ceramics is both and requires, for the production, an equipped space (machinery, deposit, packaging storage, rubbish) and for the services (design, communication, marketing etc.).

We can have 2 start-ups types:

- Ceramic designer only (outsourcing production). If you have a high knowledge of the whole process then you can design and commission your pieces without directly producing them, or only making a prototype (design thinking method);
- Ceramic designer and producer (ceramist). Nowadays the possibilities for a young ceramist are to open his own brand new studio potter; to take over the studio of another ceramist; to cooperate with an existing studio for defined/special production; to activate the start-up inside an equipped coworking space.

José Luis Silva: The state supports to open ceramic businesses, it is not very difficult to open little workshops. Also, there are co-working spaces because the market for ceramics is good, as there is a boom of tourism.

Monika Gass: Huge workshops and co-working spaces are present but young people don't use them, they don't move, they don't have joint venture spirit. We don't see so many people using these tools even though they exist. It happens more that they design the product and outsource the production. Also, she points out the importance of keeping up to date culturally, moving to see what's happening around (fairs, tendencies, reviews etc) and to stay away from trends and kitsch by redefining the concept of elegance. It is important to "be in time", working by hand and telling the importance of this. In this way we will satisfy the client request of something "real".

Oriol Calvo: There is a new interest in ceramics, in becoming a ceramist. Also, urban areas startups are made of people who are coming from other crafts (textile, design etc.), but they see in ceramics a possibility to work together.

In Spain many people share spaces to share the expenses. They also have Artist in Residence, in ceramic school to produce materials. Schools are very good and cheap and are becoming nowadays a real networking space where people working together share machinery, skills and knowledge but it is also an interesting way to connect ceramic to other cultural and commercial systems (like gastronomy and food design for example).

Conclusions

Topic 1 - Tradition and Innovation

Everyone agreed on the importance of handmade. Monica Gass added the idea of Storytelling, communicating the importance of handcraft. Tell the experience of the production. Teach how to make and edit videos, make a CV, a portfolio, social media pages, Wordpress. Know how to present oneself and one's production. Digital innovation is helpful for promotion and marketing, through tourism.

Topic 2 - Urban Environment

Souvenirs: we need to take back a "Made in Europe" tourism ceramic production.

It's interesting as every country has a different way of making ceramics for the urban environment. Portugal has Azulejos, Germany has glazed gres for external environment.

Topic 3 - Start Ups

In Germany there are many coworkers, but if they are outside city center people don't use them. There are too many artists. People outsource production.

In Portugal they have workshops and Coworking that go well.

In Spain they have coworking spaces, which are used to share the expenses. Also, there are schools that host ceramists to work.