Digital FabLab: Providing attractive experiences in footwear manufacturing studies

The Erasmus+ Digital FabLab Project, implemented by partners from Belgium, Cyprus, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania and Spain, has officially ended. Launched in March 2021, under the outreach of the Covid pandemic, the project aimed to contribute to the rapid transformation of digital education in order to make possible the learning of practical topics. The footwear industry counts now with an attractive e-learning solution for students and teachers in the footwear sector based on augmented and virtual reality tools.

Among the project outcomes, partners have developed a free Digital FabLab that includes joint international learning-by-doing training units using augmented and virtual reality tools, which will facilitate learning by doing in footwear manufacturing.

Different multiplier events were physically held in the partners' countries in order to present the digital FabLab to a larger community of stakeholders, who could try by themselves, on that occasion, the virtual shoe fab-lab and consequently, provide their first feedback.

Among the partners, the Cyprus IT company HESO, gathered international partners active in VET and adult education and IT experts working in the e-learning and gamified education industry. It presented the objectives and project results, demonstrated the courses offered by the Digital FabLab and concluded with an open discussion on the use of AR in VET education. The participants demonstrated a high interest in the developed educational methodology, and acknowledged that they will start including this educational path in their training programmes.

In Portugal, CTCP organised the event "Augmented Reality - A new way of teaching and learning" composed of teaching and learning activities. The presentation of the project results was followed by presentations on "How to innovate in the production of learning contents" and "How to motivate and attract current students". To conclude, the participants had a hands-on contact with the Digital FabLab and replied to the questionnaire in order to get more detailed feedback on the project results.

The event organised by CTCR in Spain was successfully combined with the Footwear Technology Day, attracting a large audience with demonstrations of Collaborative Robotics, Exoskeletons and Augmented Reality. The mix of integrators and potential customers generated a collaborative environment conducive to the development of business opportunities in the sector. Overall, the event fostered technological transformation and business collaboration, paving the way for the implementation of innovations in footwear production.

CEC organised an international webinar to reach a wider audience from other EU countries, which included a presentation on Extended Reality, tools (such as Augmented Reality, Virtual Reality and Mixed Reality) to clarify concepts, and their use in educational contexts. The final live demonstration of the Digital FabLab allowed participants the hands on such new technologies in footwear manufacturing.

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So far, all stakeholders have in general provided positive feedback with a few adjustments that had to be done. Partners call for other interested education centres, trainers, students, and companies' employees and managers to try the FabLab and provide their feedback HERE. This collaboration is essential to be certain that the new learning tool represents an attractive and efficient learning path to respond to companies' skills needs, so that it can contribute to produce quality footwear anywhere in Europe.

The digital FabLab and the training units in different languages are now ready to be used on the project website, along with articles and newsletters about related topics and project activities. Do not miss the opportunity to share it within your community!

The Digital FabLab project is co-financed by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union.

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