



# NEWSLETTER

March 2025

## 2nd edition of the UNIHUBS Newsletter

In this edition, we talk about the successful Design Thinking Bootcamp that took place in Ghana. It was an opportunity for the consortium members to meet with stakeholders to analyse the responses gathered from the baseline survey regarding HEI curricula and the enhancement of job opportunities for graduates.

The stakeholders included university professors, digital innovation hub managers, innovators and students.



For more information about our project, visit: [www.unihubs.eu](http://www.unihubs.eu)



### The UNIHUBS consortium



Funded by the European Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those Of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union EACEA can be held responsible for them. [Project number: 1011283131]

# UNIHUBS Design Thinking Bootcamp...

## Co creation in action

The UNIHUBS project, co-funded by the European Union through the Erasmus+ programme, is setting a bold vision for African higher education. Its core aim is to empower higher education institutions (HEIs) to become engines of digital innovation through collaborative partnerships with digital innovation hubs (DIHs), industry, and civil society. Hapaspace hosted it from March 18–19, 2025. This vision took a powerful step forward in Kumasi, Ghana, where the UNIHUBS Design Thinking Bootcamp gathered 60 participants from 12 institutions across.

Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania, Greece, and the Netherlands. The bootcamp wasn't just another workshop but was a hands-on, minds-on experience designed to co-create actionable solutions that better align academic learning with real-world digital labour market demands.



## Event Proceedings



The event was deeply informed by two foundational research efforts:

- **Needs Analysis Report**—This study revealed critical gaps:
  - Outdated curricula, particularly in rural HEIs, with little focus on digital skills.
  - Weak collaboration between HEIs and DIHs, often blocked by institutional silos.
  - Limited digital competencies, such as AI, cybersecurity, and big data.
  - Soft skills shortages, with employers calling for better communication and teamwork among graduates.
- **Best Practices Report**— This study spotlighted successful models that inspired participants:
  - Ashesi University (Ghana): A campus-wide embrace of design thinking.
  - INNOTAL (Europe–Asia): Cross-disciplinary student innovation labs.
  - CARISCA & SASBI: Programs building digital and entrepreneurial capacity.

## Event Proceedings

Together, these insights helped participants understand not just what's broken, but how it's being fixed elsewhere and what could work in their contexts.

**Bootcamp Methodology**—Participants were guided through a human-centred design thinking process:

- **Day 1—Discovery & Ideation:** Using the IDEA Framework, diverse cross-country teams diagnosed real challenges, brainstormed responses, and validated their problem statements.
- **Day 2—Prototyping & Design:** With the Prototype Development Canvas in hand, teams transformed ideas into implementable blueprints that defined stakeholders, risks, impact, and next steps.

Each of the seven multidisciplinary teams presented creative, grounded solutions. These were inspired by the real needs participants face every day. Here are some highlights:

- **Policy-Backed Collaboration Platform:** A digital, policy-supported space to formalise HEI–DIH–industry cooperation.
- **Labour Market & Learning Hub:** A student-focused portal integrating job data, skills tracking, and digital learning.
- **Flexible Curriculum Model:** Modular, industry-informed learning with embedded soft skills and real-world assessments.
- **Digital Matchmaking Tool:** A web/app platform for pairing HEIs and DIHs based on interests and specialisations.
- **NTENTAN (Spiderweb Model):** A dynamic network model linking academia, industry, and policy through joint activities.



## Event Proceedings



As the bootcamp unfolded, several recurring themes emerged:

- **Technology as a Connector:** Not just a tool, but a catalyst for visibility, communication, and collaboration.
- **Curriculum Reform as Urgent:** Nearly every team called for more flexible, co-designed curricula aligned with industry needs.
- **Inclusion as Non-Negotiable:** Especially the urban-rural divide, with a push for equity in infrastructure and access.
- **Co-Ownership as Key:** Sustainable change must involve students, faculty, industry, and government—not in silos, but together.

These align perfectly with UNIHUBS' three guiding pillars:

- **Mechanisms for HEI-DIH interaction and exchange are crucial.**
- **Digital skills and competency frameworks.**
- **Labour market integration into curricula.**

# Reflections



## What Worked:

- **Diverse voices:** The event brought together academia, innovation hubs, NGOs, and businesses that are all shaping solutions.
- **Practical tools:** The design thinking frameworks enabled clear thinking and real-world applicability.
- **Authentic engagement:** Solutions addressed genuine institutional challenges, increasing buy-in and relevance.

## Conclusion: A Catalyst for Change

The UNIHUBS Design Thinking Bootcamp ignited fresh ideas, validated practical tools, and built a growing community committed to reshaping African higher education to meet the needs of the digital age. By empowering stakeholders to think differently and design together, this bootcamp brought the UNIHUBS vision one step closer to reality: a more inclusive, innovative, and responsive learning ecosystem ready for the future.