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# VISUALIZE

**An innovative training concept for strengthening  
the tolerance and soft skills of young people**

**IO2 Development of the training paths + testing phase**

**Training Path for implementation**

Erasmus+, Strategic Partnerships for Youth  
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The Institute for Visual Literacy was founded by Angelika Jung, an Austrian Art Historian, in December 2015 to train professionals. The Institute for Visual Literacy offers professional training to teachers, trainers, instructors or training supervisors in the field of visual literacy to foster social development as well as improve academic achievement.

## **Contributions:**

P1: Christliches Jugenddorfwerk Deutschland e.V., CJD Verbund NRW/Süd Rheinland

P3: Fundación INTRAS

P4: Center for development and education

P5: Best Cybernetics

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1 INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>4</b>
1.1 Purpose.....	4
1.2 Scope.....	5
1.2.1 Planning Principles .....	5
1.2.2 Assumptions .....	5
1.2.3 Constraints.....	5
<b>2 ROLES &amp; RESPONSIBILITIES.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3 REQUIREMENT &amp; PREREQUISITES.....</b>	<b>6</b>
3.1 TRAINING ENVIRONMENTS.....	6
3.2 TRAINING AUDIENCE.....	6
3.3 TRAINING TIME FRAME.....	6
3.4 EXPECTATIONS.....	6
3.5 EVALUATION CRITERIAS .....	7
3.6 SUCCESS FACTORS .....	7
<b>4 STRATEGY &amp; APPROACH .....</b>	<b>8</b>
4.1 Delivery Method .....	8
4.2 Dependencies and Limitations.....	9
<b>5 TRAINING RESOURCES .....</b>	<b>9</b>
5.1 Staffing.....	9
5.2 Environment.....	9
<b>6 TRAINING SCHEDULE.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>7 TRAINING EVALUATION.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>8 KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>9 REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>10 ANNEX .....</b>	<b>11</b>

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 PURPOSE

VISUALIZE is an innovative training concept for strengthening the tolerance and soft skills of young people funded by Erasmus+, Strategic Partnerships for Youth. It provides professional training to social and education professionals working with youth - educators and teachers, as well as care givers, therapists and social workers-, in the field of visual literacy, which are the so called experts of this project. It encourages tolerance and social development, as well improving academic achievement. With the use of images and discussion, young people experience various viewpoints and build on each other's thoughts. VISUALIZE enables students to use existing visual and cognitive skills to develop confidence and experience, learning to use what they already know to figure out what they don't know.

While participating in discussions about art, young people gain self-esteem and skills in the fields of communication, critical thinking and social development. Good citizenship is inspired through cooperation, tolerance for the views of others, sensible conflict resolution, free speech and active engagement. It also creates an even playing field among people of varying levels of education, communication skills and differing mother languages. The VISUALIZE program uses images at its core, and is therefore, well suited to serve heterogenic learning environments (inclusion, integration, transcultural affairs).

The central objectives of the program are:

1. The immediate need of our target group – young people – to contribute to the creation of a more tolerant society, especially for young people who are vulnerable to various political movements in the EU and countries, candidates for the EU. With Visual Thinking Strategies, users obtain the skills necessary to effectively deal with the migration challenges we currently face in the EU.
2. The use of Visual Thinking Strategies, a method developed by Abigail Housen and Philip Yenawine, helps prepare young people for the job market by improving their soft skills. During the training phase, experts from the participating countries test and further develop the basic strategies in their field of expertise increasing communication skills, social competencies, empathy, self-esteem and self-reliance.
3. Finally, this project is designed to equip organizations with useful new strategies and approaches which combine art education in an uncommon way. Therefore, young people, trainers and educators alike will benefit from the project.

## **1.2 SCOPE**

The Visual Thinking Strategies training path is designed to train partners, most commonly care givers and therapists, the dynamics of Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) so they may incorporate this methodology in their educational tool kit for young people. The goal is to further develop this basic strategy in their field of expertise. No previous knowledge or experience is required. Through use of images, partners are able to help students/clients/patients expand their language, critical thinking and listening capabilities, resulting in increased soft-skills and tolerance to an ever-changing world.

### **1.2.1 Planning Principles**

In order to make this project work, partners and their respective experts will participate in a five-day Visual Thinking Strategies short term joint staff training near Cologne, Germany. After the training, participants will be able to conduct simple VTS discussions in their professional environment.

### **1.2.2 Assumptions**

The improvement of visual literacy enhances communications and critical thinking skills among challenged young people which leads to better cross-cultural understanding and consequently to a more tolerant view of the world.

In the target group's vision, insulated by sameness and peer-pressure, they will develop a more open minded, tolerant view toward others and consequently create more peaceful communities.

Together, we should all learn the VTS methodology, as this process does not start from the bottom with the target group but rather from the top down including the partners. We will set the example of transcultural dialogue.

### **1.2.3 Constraints**

The success of the VISUALIZE project depends on the participants ability to conduct Visual Thinking Strategies correctly. The training is only a beginning of a process to learn this new skill. When starting VTS in the field, experts must follow the process and materials without alteration. With every hour of practice, the expert will become more confident and relaxed to the point where he/she can alter the methodology to the needs of his/her special target group. Follow-up workshops for the experts are recommended.

## **2 ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES**

The VTS training will be conducted by Angelia Jung, the head of the Institute for Visual Literacy. At the end of this professional training workshop, participants received detailed

instructions for implementing 10 VTS sessions, including a set of carefully selected images used to initiate group discussions.

When the experts begin using VTS in the field, they will be asked to report their experience using VTS reflection sheets provided. They also will be asked to complete a final report answering specific questions to summarize their experience.

The information obtained from these experts will be processed by the Institute for Visual Literacy into an evaluation report with the goal of making VISUALIZE accessible to new target groups.

### **3 REQUIREMENT & PREREQUISITES**

#### **3.1 TRAINING ENVIRONMENTS**

Training environment 1:

- A meeting room with seating and writing surfaces;
- A projector and audiovisual equipment;
- Light blocking window shades; and
- Access to W-LAN

Training environment 2:

- Art Museums for practical application

#### **3.2 TRAINING AUDIENCE**

- Professionals in the fields of health, education and social work.
- No special knowledge or experience is required.

#### **3.3 TRAINING TIME FRAME**

- Short-term joint staff training event, 5 days

#### **3.4 EXPECTATIONS**

After completing the short-term joint staff training event, the experts will begin to practice simple VTS discussions in their professional environments. References to open source available material have been shared and are listed in the annex. The experts will hold a total of 10 VTS sessions – proposed timing one session every two weeks in a 20-week time period. Two sample sessions will be provided in the Annex for guidance and as a basis for further development, which has to be adjusted according to the specific target group.

Conducting these sessions as instructed will increase the experts' confidence and effectiveness in this new method. Since this project considers art as the first step to open minds it is suggested the final session takes place in a local art gallery or museum.

### 3.5 EVALUATION CRITERIAS

- a. VISUALIZE focuses on the following evaluation questions:

**Question 1:**

Does participation in the VISUALIZE program affect participants ability to interpret visual images?

**Question 2:**

Does participation in the VISUALIZE program affect participants development in social competence and soft skills?

**Question 3:**

Does participation in the VISUALIZE program affect participants behavior in terms of tolerance towards others?

**Question 4:**

Does participation in the VISUALIZE program promote participants language development?

**Question 5:**

Does participation in the VISUALIZE program promote participants critical thinking development?

- b. In addition to the five specific questions various implementation findings will also be addressed in the final evaluation report.

The program evaluation report will be published on the VISUALIZE web site.

### 3.6 SUCCESS FACTORS

Research (see *References*) shows that participation in VTS education improves communication, critical thinking and social skills. Awareness of one's own perception of the world in contrast to the perception of one's peers expands becoming more nuanced inclusive and tolerant and mutual understanding. Areas of enrichment are:

*Critical Thinking*

- Detailed observation
- Inferring meaning from those observations
- Evidence-based inferences
- Consider multiple inferences, holding a variety of plausible views
- Ability to revise your viewpoint

#### Language

- Exposure to a variety of vocabulary
- Appropriate word choice
- Grammar enrichment

#### Social Skills

- Listening Skills
- Etiquette for discussions
- Constructive disagreement
- Recognition of the importance of various view points
- Enrichment via diversity (instead of anxiety and conflict)
- Innovation as a result of exposure to diverse ideas
- Building the creative mind
- Recognition of one's own perception

## **4 STRATEGY & APPROACH**

The Visual Thinking Strategies uses images/art to teach thinking, communication skills, social skills and visual literacy to young people. Growth is stimulated by three factors:

- Looking at images/art of increasing complexity
- Responding to developmentally-based questions,
- Participating in group discussions that are carefully facilitated by experts.

### **4.1 DELIVERY METHOD**

There will be a short-term joint staff training event for experts from each partner organization. It includes lectures, practical application and printed materials, suggested reading list and sample sessions after returning to the home base.

#### **Professional training overview**

- VTS in action – taking the team through the process to ensure full understanding
- VTS application and coaching within the physical environment of the Museum Ludwig, Cologne and Wallraf Richartz Museum, Cologne in order to develop facilitation skills



- Practice paraphrasing and linking skills the basis of the program
- Introduction to basic principles of image selection
- Detailed discussion about managing VTS in their professional settings.
- Determine goals for trainers/teachers and therapists
- Establish goals for the young people/patients/clients
- Research & Theory presentation
- How to take the basics of VTS and expand them to ensure relevancy in their specific professional areas

## **4.2 DEPENDENCIES AND LIMITATIONS**

See 1.2.3. Constraints

## **5 TRAINING RESOURCES**

- Knowledge from job experience of the VTS expert
- VTS Theory and Research (see *References*)
- General information relevant to visual thinking education from research on the Internet (<http://www.inspiration.com/visual-learning> [ 09.04.2018])

### **5.1 STAFFING**

Visual Thinking Strategies Expert plus assistant if possible.

### **5.2 ENVIRONMENT**

We will need an accessible and comfortable location to accommodate all participating experts with appropriate equipment (projection and audio). The theoretical part of the training will take place in this location. The practical part will take place in world-class museums.

## **6 TRAINING SCHEDULE**

See Agenda in the Annex.

## **7 TRAINING EVALUATION**

After the training, participants will fill out a satisfaction survey that will be reviewed and shared. See Annex.

## 8 KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

This appendix lists and defines the key terms used in this document.

Experts	Youth workers and educators as well as therapists, care givers and social workers who will implement the program with the target group
Target Group	Physically and mentally challenged young people, as well as youth in rural areas
VTS	Visual Thinking – the methodology that will be used to reach the goal of the project
Partner	The five Partner Organizations that are cooperating in the project in a strategic partnership, coming from Germany, Austria, Greece, Spain & FYROM.

## 9 REFERENCES

- Philip Yenawine (2013): Visual Thinking, Cambridge, UK: Harvard Educational Publishing Group
- Visual Thinking Strategies <https://vtshome.org/> [05.04.2018]
- Abigail Housen (1999): Eye of the Beholder: Research, Theory and Practice, Presented at the conference of "Aesthetic and Art Education: a Transdisciplinary Approach," sponsored by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Service of Education September 27-29, 1999, Lisbon, Portugal
- Artful Citizenship Program: Wolfsonian Museum's educational research program [http://artfulcitizenship.wolfsonian.org/main\\_content.html](http://artfulcitizenship.wolfsonian.org/main_content.html) [06.04.2018]

## 10 ANNEX

### *Sample Lessons*

#### **Preparation**

- View the art work you have chosen for your 1<sup>st</sup> VTS discussion
- Memorize the three key questions
- Is your equipment ready, the room dark and the seating arranged?
- Think about how to introduce VTS to your audience?

#### **Discussion**

- **BEGINNING** Introduce VTS to your audience. Tell the group that this lesson is about viewing images together. It is all about their viewpoints, their observations, and their ideas. Take the participants' fear by telling them that there is no right or wrong answer. All what counts is their viewpoints.

- **PROJECT THE SLIDE.** Ask students/patients to examine it silently.

- **QUESTIONING.**

Begin with: **What's going on in this picture?**

When an interpretation is given, ask: **What do you see that makes you say that?**

Throughout the discussion, ask: **What more can we find?**

- **RESPONDING**

Point precisely to what participants describe.

Be supportive as you listen.

Paraphrase each comment / Stay neutral and use conditional language

Link related statements

Whenever it is needed use: "What do you see that makes you say that?"

- **CONCLUDING THE CLASS**

Compliment the students/patients on their discussion (do not summarize the discussion).

1 <sup>st</sup> day		
time	topic	responsible
09:00 – 09:10	Welcome	CJD
09:10 – 09:30	Workshop overview	Institut für Visuelle Bildung
09:30 – 10:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduction to Visual Literacy</li> <li>What is Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS)</li> </ul>	Institut für Visuelle Bildung
10:30 – 10:45	Tea/Coffee	
10:45 – 12:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>VTS Discussion 1</li> <li>VTS Discussion 2 with deconstruction of the method</li> </ul>	Institut für Visuelle Bildung
12:30 – 13:15	Lunch	
13:15 – 14:15	Travel to museum	
14:15 – 17:15	<b>Practice and coaching:</b> Museum Ludwig, Heinrich-Böll-Platz, 50667 Cologne	Institut für Visuelle Bildung
17:15 – 18:00	End of day reflection (Museums Café)	Institut für Visuelle Bildung
2 <sup>nd</sup> day		
time	topic	responsible
09:00 – 09:30	Reflections from previous day	Institut für Visuelle Bildung
09:30 – 10:00	Focus on managing VTS discussions	Institut für Visuelle Bildung
10:00 – 10:45	View video and deconstruct	Institut für Visuelle Bildung
10:45 – 11:00	Tea / Coffee	
11:00 – 11:30	Goals for trainers/teachers – developing facilitation skills	Institut für Visuelle Bildung
11:30 – 12:00	Goals for young people/patients/clients – developing various skills	Institut für Visuelle Bildung
12:00 – 12:30	Translation of VTS questions (paired activity)	Institut für Visuelle Bildung
12:30 – 13:30	Lunch	
13:30 – 15:00	Deepening VTS – introduction to “framing”	Institut für Visuelle Bildung

15:00 – 15:15	Tea / Coffee	
15:15 – 16:00	Practical application of expanded VTS method	Institut für Visuelle Bildung
16:00 – 17:00	Focus on specifics of paraphrasing	Institut für Visuelle Bildung
<b>3rd day</b>		
<b>time</b>	<b>topic</b>	<b>responsible</b>
09:30 – 13:00	<b>Practice and coaching:</b> Wallraf-Richartz-Museum, Obenmarspforten 40, 50667 Cologne	Institut für Visuelle Bildung
13:00 – 14:00	Lunch	
14:00 – 17:00	Reflection	Paired work or self-study tbd
<b>4<sup>th</sup> day</b>		
<b>time</b>	<b>topic</b>	<b>responsible</b>
09:00 – 09:30	Reflection of Day 3	Institut für Visuelle Bildung
09:30 – 10:45	Introduction to VTS research and theory part 1 (Focus on the VTS-questions)	Institut für Visuelle Bildung
10:45 – 11:00	Tea / Coffee	
11:00 – 12:30	Introduction to VTS research and theory part 2 (Focus on stage theory of Abigail Housen)	Institut für Visuelle Bildung
12:30 – 13:30	Lunch	
13:30 – 14:15	Basic principles for selecting images	Institut für Visuelle Bildung
14:15 – 15:00	Paired image selection for a VTS session in the working environments (goals etc...)	Institut für Visuelle Bildung
15:00 – 15:15	Tea / Coffee	
15:15 – 16:00	Focus on Details of images, Comparison of images	Institut für Visuelle Bildung
16:00 – 17:00	General discussion about implementation, any questions etc....	Institut für Visuelle Bildung
<b>5<sup>th</sup> day</b>		
<b>time</b>	<b>topic</b>	<b>responsible</b>
09:30 – 10:30	<i>What is VTS?</i> Make notes (max. 75 words) and explain VTS to the group as if the members of the	CJD

	group were unfamiliar with the method (paired exercise)	
10:30 – 10:45	Tea / Coffee	
10:45 – 12:30	- Translate the explanation into your own language - Thoughts about implementation	CJD
12:30 – 13:15	Lunch	
13:15 – 14:00	Final reflections, evaluations, goodbye and thank you	CJD

### *Training evaluation*

1. The information provided before the meeting (how to arrive, recommendation for accommodation, food, etc.) were good enough for everyone and everyone was satisfied
  - 5 😊
2. The timetable of the meeting was appropriate.
  - 5 😊
3. The venue was appropriate for the training.
  - 5 😊
4. The materials provided by the trainer to understand the technique were appropriate.
  - 5 😊
5. Did the trainer present the methodology in a clear and understandable manner?
  - 5 😊
6. Did the workshop fulfill your expectations?
  - 5 😊
7. Which part of the workshop was the most helpful for you?
  - Practice VTS in the Museums
  - Theory about the VTS and practice
  - Museum => practical work
  - Practice the technique in/out in the museum
  - Practical work
8. Which part the least?
  - History (Theory) of VTS research
9. Is there anything that could be added or changed that would make this workshop more beneficial for you?
  - I have not suggestions to add; the concept and topics were good and really helpful.
  - Although it's difficult and hard maybe to make it more intensive with more practical part.
  - More practice in the museum.
10. Overall, I am satisfied with the training.
  - 5 😊

### **Any other suggestions or comments?**

- Organization, content, topics => very well organized
- Really helpful workshop increased our knowledge and showed us an adequate way how to incorporate in our future work with young people.
- In general it has been a very useful seminar, very professional trainer and a huge support by the host organization=>a very interesting experience
- I think the last day could be before day 1, maybe reduce one morning for the evaluation or add one afternoon of work.