



WP2.

*A.1. Youth Workers Needs Assessment
Report from Austria*



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Introduction

Globalization of Internet has made the spreading of knowledge and information free and accessible to almost everyone with access to a computer or smartphone. This offered a great opportunity from most disadvantaged groups to access to relevant information and to facilitate their learning via non-formal environments (Leshner et al., 2022). However, the fast and increased spread of Internet to almost everyone, has also made easy the boost of untruths and misinformation online. In a world where most of us are digitally connected, it is critical the managing of the amount of information we receive daily, and identify the reliable ones, so people can, exercise their social, civic, political and economic choices and decisions with knowledge and free of prejudice, malintention and unconsciousness (Leshner et al., 2022).

As migrants are a group that mostly search for integration information online and using digital sources, the **Digital4All – Building a Digital World for All Erasmus+ project**, aims to capacitate youth workers with knowledge on critical thinking, tiny habits and digital competences, so they can enhance migrant’s intentions and abilities to assess information online. As a first step of the project, working group sessions were developed in each country to assess needs, knowledge and overall perspectives youth workers have regarding the beforementioned key-concepts. This report highlights the main findings of the needs assessment developed in Portugal, with youth workers with an activity in RightChallenge.

Methodology

A working group discussion was prepared with the aim to analyze the knowledge, needs and general perspectives youth workers have regarding the concepts and approaches of **critical thinking**, **tiny habits** and **digital competences** in their work role. The discussion used active and participatory methods (i.e., brainwriting), as well as self-assessment tools for creative thinking ([Link](#)) and digital competences ([Link](#)), A sign-in sheet was distributed (Annex 1.) and pictures from the group were made.

Participants

Five youth workers from different organizations took part on the workshop.

They were coming from different organizations working with you people in the area of the municipalities of Kapfenberg and Mürzzuschlag. Kapfenberg and Mürzzuschlag are small town (between 20.-25.0000 inhabitants each) in the region of Upper Styria east. This region is dominated by companies from the steel sector. The unemployment rate int his region is 5,6% (AMS Steiermark; Bearbeitung und Berechnung: A17 - Referat Statistik und Geoinformation)

Most o the participating social workers belong to an experienced working population with more than ten year o work experiences.

Results

Critical Thinking

The term of **critical thinking** was well known among the five participating youth workers.

Critical thinking is seen as the ability to effectively analyze information and form a judgment. To think critically, you must be aware of your own biases and assumptions when encountering information, and apply consistent standards when evaluating sources.

Critical thinking skills help you to:

- Identify credible sources
- Evaluate and respond to arguments
- Assess alternative viewpoints
- Test hypotheses against relevant criteria

Why is critical thinking important?

Critical thinking is important for making judgments about sources of information and forming your own arguments. It emphasizes a rational, objective, and self-aware approach that can help you to identify credible sources and strengthen your conclusions.

All youth workers understand critical thinking as an **ability and learned competence**, and therefore a should be included in a training program.

As learning method the **active learning approach** was suggested. Active learning is an approach which gets participants more involved and engaged in their learning.

Youth Workers Creative Thinking Competences

Youth workers scored an average of **91,40 points** (min 0-120 max). In the Creative Thinking Skills Self-Assessment. Although self-assessed, this score reveals confidence of participants in their skills to thinking creatively.

Active Learning approach for Critical Thinking

Active learning generally refers to any instructional method that engages learners in the learning process beyond listening and passive note taking. Active learning approaches promote skill development and higher order thinking through activities that might include reading, writing, and/or discussion. Metacognition -- thinking about one's thinking -- can also be an important element, helping students connect course activities to their learning (Brame, 2016).

Active learning is rooted in constructivist learning theory, or the idea that learners learn by connecting new information and experiences to their prior knowledge and experiences, allowing them to build, or construct, new knowledge and understandings (Bransford et al., 1999). Often, although not exclusively, active learning approaches also include collaborative and cooperative learning in small

groups. These approaches stem from social constructivism(link is external), which emphasizes the importance of peer-to-peer interactions in learning (Vygotsky 1978).

Beyond the theoretical underpinnings, many studies across disciplines have explored the benefits of active learning approaches in college classrooms (e.g., Freeman et al., 2014; Prince et al., 2004). Active learning strategies provide valuable opportunities for youngsters to develop disciplinary skills and expertise, including serving as sources of knowledge, formulating questions and articulating ideas, as well as fostering interactions with peers (Turpen & Finkelstein, 2009). Perhaps most notably, compared to traditional lecture alone, use of active learning approaches has been shown to increase learners performance and decrease failure rates, particularly for students from underrepresented and excluded communities (Eddy & Hogan, 2014; Haak et al., 2011; Theobald et al., 2020).

What are some active learning strategies ?

There are many different active learning strategies that instructors might incorporate into their teaching. These can range from brief interactions during lecture, activities that may take 10-20 minutes, to strategies that could span multiple class periods. The table below outlines a variety of sample strategies with tips for both in-person and remote implementation in courses. The strategies are roughly organized based on potential time-intensity for implementation. Instructors might also explore these active learning designs as they consider opportunities for using each strategy:

- Purposeful Pause(expand)
- Quick Write or “Minute” Paper(expand)
- Think-Pair-Share (TPS)(expand)
- Polling/Peer Instruction(expand)
- Concept Map(expand)
- Case Study/Group Problem Solving(expand)
- Think-Aloud Problem Solving(expand)
- Jigsaw(expand)
- Gallery Walk

Little Habits

All participating youth workers youth have never heard about the Little Habits approach. After the explanation and the youtube-video which we showed to the youth workers , they declared that this is similar to a methodology called “Kleine Schritte” (small steps).

The principle of small steps is an approach from behavioral therapy and has nothing to do with the method of small steps from physics. The principle is also used in motivational coaching and mental training.

The way to the big goal should be divided into small intermediate goals. But instead of working doggedly on these goals for hours every day, you should rather plan to spend only 10 minutes a day on them. Especially with goals that seem too big for you to tackle, you can quickly get into action with this method. Instead of only having the big goal in mind, the path now becomes the goal.

In our opinion the methodology of little habits and small steps is very equal and maybe the difference is just laying in the translation of the name of the methodology, not in the content of these two methodologies..

Digital Competences

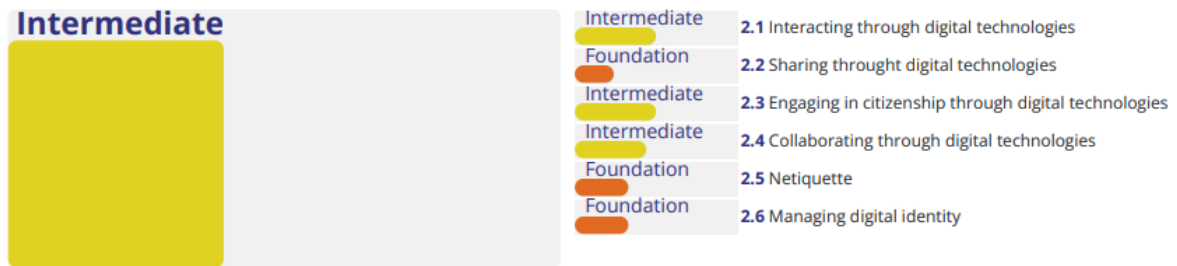
Digital competences of youth workers regarding the 5 big domains – Information and Data Literacy, Communication and Collaboration, Digital Content Creation, Safety and Problem Resolution ranged mostly from Foundation to Intermediate, accordingly to the MyDigiSkills assessment test (<https://mydigiskills.eu/test/>). The assessment was done in a group work, because the participated youth workers decided to do this in that way.

Information and Data Literacy



Regarding Information and Data Literacy, participants have foundation know how in point 1.1 (Browsing, searching, filtering data, information and digital content) and 1.2.(Evaluating data, information and digital content. Intermdiate know how can be found in 1.3 (Managing data, information and digital content)

Communication and Collaboration



Regarding Communication and Collaboration, participants have foundation know how in point 2.2, 2.5 and 2.6. Intermediate know how can be found in 2.1, 2.3 and 2.4.

Digital Content Creation



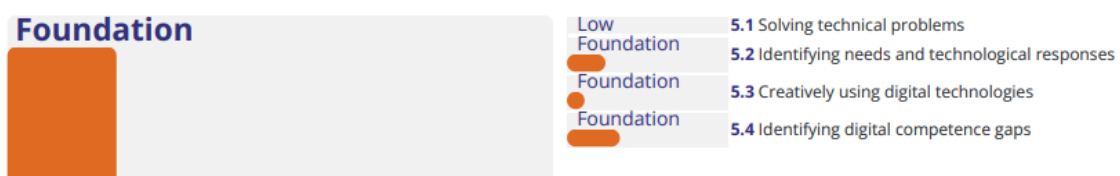
Regarding Content Creation, participants have mostly foundation know how. Only in 3.4. (programming) the participating youth workers have low know how.

Safety



Regarding Safety, participants have low and foundation know how. Low know how in point 4.2 and 4.4. Foundation know how in 4.1 and 4.3.

Problem Resolution



The range for the field problem resolution goes from low (5.1) to Foundation (5.2; 5.3; 5.4)

Relevance for Labor Context

All youth workers expressed the relevance of all three topics in their work context. Critical thinking and little habits are more seen as a methodological approach, while digital competences are mostly seen as basic competences especially in the working world.

Conclusion

The following conclusions were done:

- Youth work and youth policies are proactive and give due consideration to technological development and digitalisation, and they identify the positive and negative impacts of digitalisation on society, including on youth work practices and services
- Youth workers have an agile and critical mindset towards digital technology, and have competences to deliver quality youth work
- Increased collaboration and international global networks and networking

References

Social Inclusion, Digitalisation and Young People- Research study; Authors: Adina Marina Șerban, Center for Sustainable Community Development, Romania, Veronica Stefan, Founder of Digital Citizens Romania Think-Tank, Romania; Dunja Potocnik, Institute for Social Research, Zagreb, Croatia; Dan Moxon, People Dialogue and Change, UK; Co-ordinator of the study: Lana Pasic, EU-Council of Europe youth partnership

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Annexes

Annex 1.



Project: "Building a Digital World for All"
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Name of participant	Organisation	Signature
Wolfgang Schobert	brainplus	<i>[Signature]</i>
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Signed In sheet.

