



## WP2.

### *A.1. Youth Workers Needs Assessment Report from Portugal*



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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., brainstorming, word cloud, open-ended) using the platform Ahaslides ([Link](#)), as well as self-assessment tools for creative thinking ([Link](#)) and digital competences ([Link](#)), and audiovisual resources ([Link](#)). A sign-in sheet was distributed (Annex 1.)

## Participants

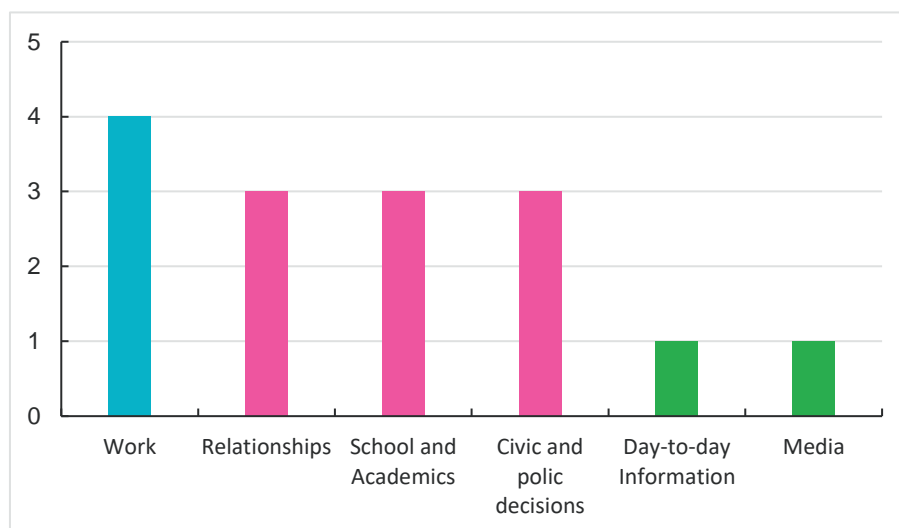
Five youth workers from RightChallenge participated in the working group. Average age was 26,2 years old. All participants work as social project managers, with an average experience of 6,2 months in the area.

## Results

### Critical Thinking

Most youth workers within RightChallenge were familiar with the term of **critical thinking**. Overall, participants characterized this high-order cognition as a process in which analysis, comparison, reflection and decision making are part of. The result from critical thinking is made up of unbiased, fact-checked, logic, rational and weighted outputs. Youth workers further mentioned flexibility as a specific aspect that fits into the component of critical thinking.

Critical thinking is perceived by youth workers as relevant in **all sectors of life**, that included work and labor force (i.e., in searching for a job), social relationships, education (i.e., “*or else we think that colonialism was a thriving period*” [sic]), civic and policy decision-making processes (i.e., elections), media and social networks, and in day-to-day life (Figure 1.). Ultimately, critical thinking was also perceived by one youth worker as important for personal development, highlighting this process as critical for self-analysis and self-reflection.



**Figure 1.** Sectors of life where critical thinking was perceived as relevant by RightChallenge youth workers.

All youth workers understand critical thinking as a **learned competence**, and therefore a process that can be trained and acquired. Participants mentioned **active learning strategies** such as debates, guided role playing, information reading and analysis, brainstorming and information gathering from different sources useful for developing critical thinking.

Following an exercise that required critical thinking from youth workers, most **mentioned elaborated strategies** to remember the following list of ingredients: vegetables, minced meat, milk, cheese, tomato sauce, flour and eggs. Most mentioned strategies were using mnemonics (i.e., find words that start with the first letter of the ingredients) making a song, blocking (i.e., categorizing foods by supermarket corridors; associating colors to the foods)) and finding keywords (i.e., “*lasagna*”).

### Youth Workers Creative Thinking Competences

Youth workers scored an average of **95,80 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.

### Barriers and Facilitators of Critical Thinking

Different domains of **barriers** to critical thinking were mentioned by youth workers. The most mentioned group of barriers are related to **socio-economic factors** (N=4), such as the culture of each country and ethnicity, socio-economic status and capitalism, followed by **psychological and cognitive factors**, such as motivation (N=3), mental rigidity (N=1) and late reward (N=1). **Educational factors**

(N=2), like generational trauma (i.e., the perpetuating of narratives, without critically assessing it) and repressive education, were also mentioned. Other barriers that were mentioned were related to the **gap of contact with diverse** realities, experiences and information (N=1) and **biological factors** (hunger) (N=1). Finally, **logistics in** availability of time, tools and information (lack or excess of it) was mentioned to have an impact in critical thinking.

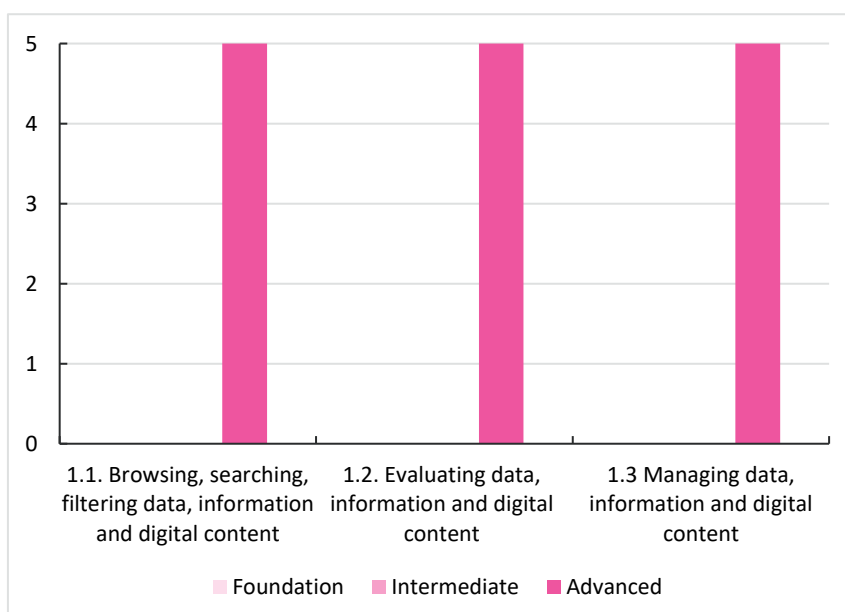
As for **facilitators**, participants perceived that for fostering critical thinking a composure of environmental and individual factors must be present and guaranteed. **Individual factors** included consciousness (i.e., by fostering interactions with different realities), tolerance, respect and flexibility for the difference and diversity, and motivation. For **environmental factors**, it was mostly discussed the need of access to diverse information, opinions and realities and the liberty to explore it, the dissemination of practical strategies that can foster critical thinking, the promotion of mental stimulus and, ultimately, the availability of digital tools and devices, such as smartphones and computers with access to Internet.

## Little Habits

Four youth workers (75%) had heard about Little Habits approach. In the understanding of workers from RightChallenge, this motivational approach is consisted of reduced sized actions (i.e., making bed), that require little resources from the individual (i.e., time, effort, energy), aimed at developing a routine or a personal goal. From this perspective, 75% (N=4) considered Tiny Habits a good method for developing new routines in youth.

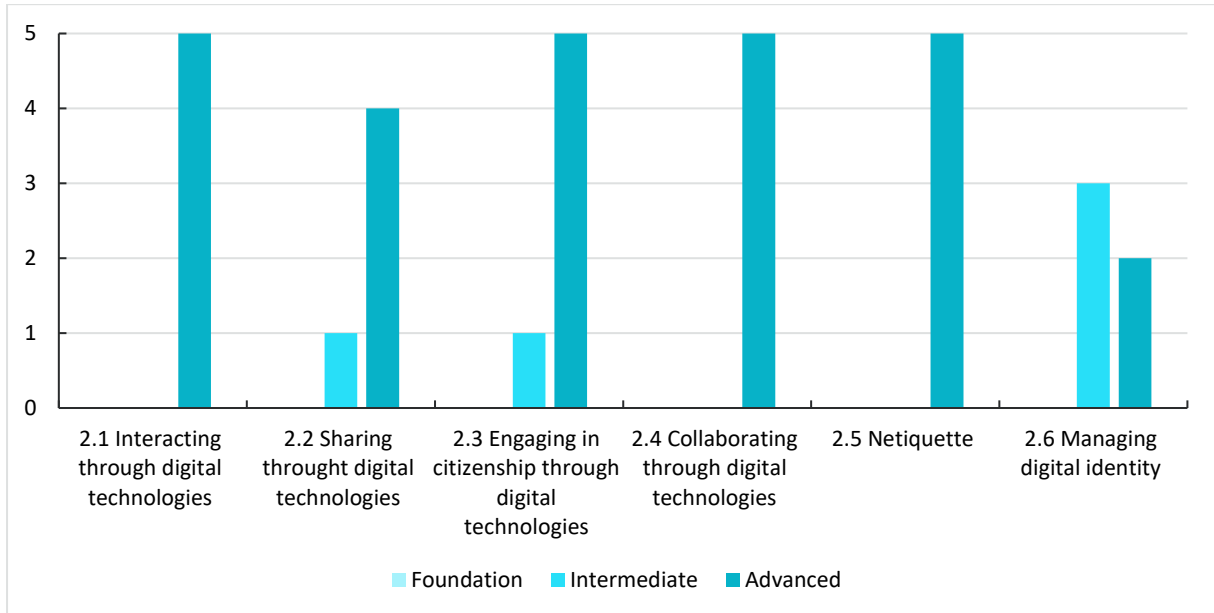
## Digital Competences

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 Intermediate to Advance, accordingly to the MyDigiSkills assessment test (<https://mydigiskills.eu/test/>). All youth workers revealed to be advanced in **Information and Data Literacy**, namely in browsing, searching, filtering, evaluating and managing digital data and content. (Figure 2.).



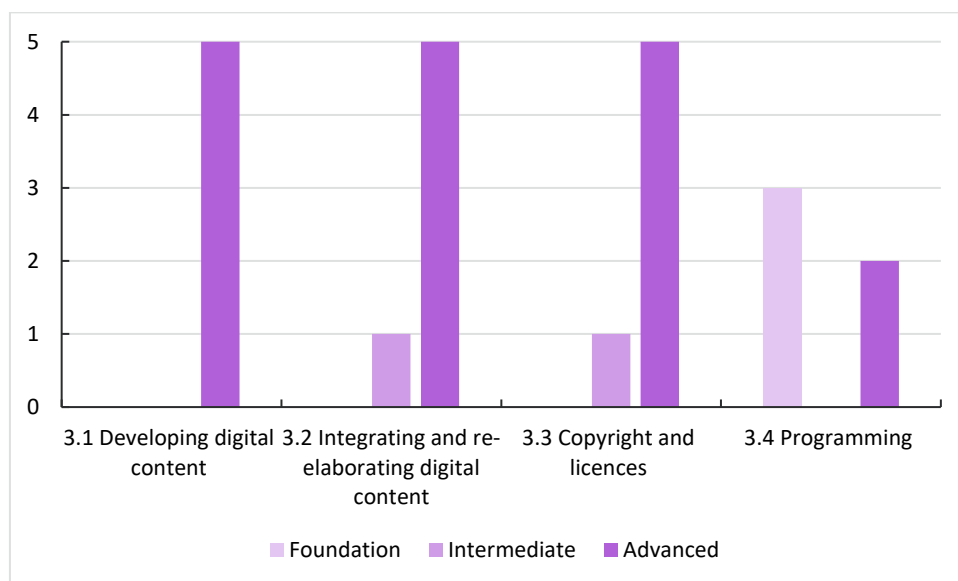
**Figure 2.** Level of digital competences of RightChallenge youth workers regarding Information and Data Literacy domain.

Regarding **Communication and Collaboration**, participants revealed to be mostly advanced in interacting, sharing, engaging in citizenship and collaborating using digital technologies, as well as in Netiquette (Figure 3.). Managing digital identity was one specific subdomain where participants revealed more abilities gap (Figure 3.)



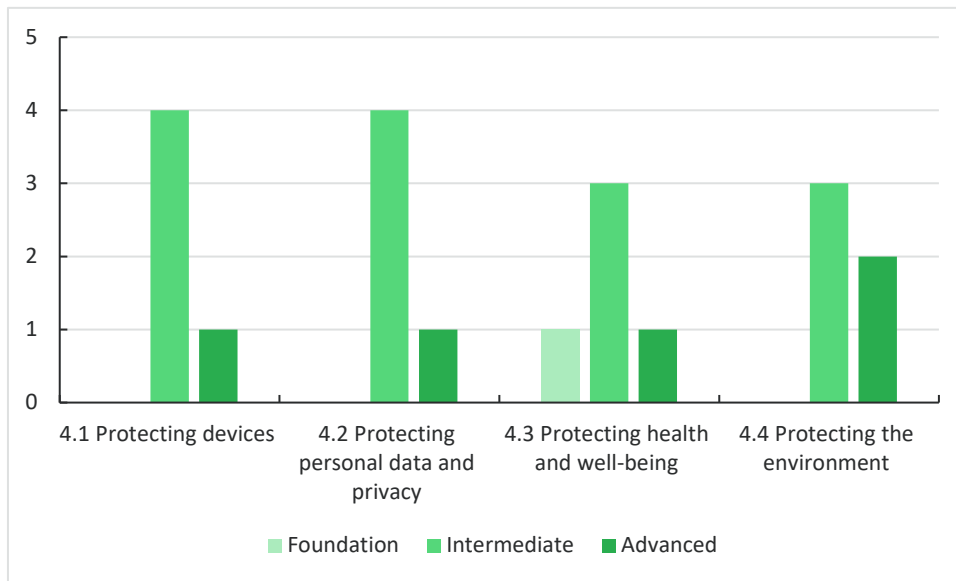
**Figure 3.** Level of digital competences of RightChallenge youth workers regarding Communication and Collaboration domain.

In **Digital Content Creation** domain, participant competences ranged more within and cross-groups. All revealed to be advanced in developing digital content, but more intermediate, most promptly, in programming (Figure 4.).



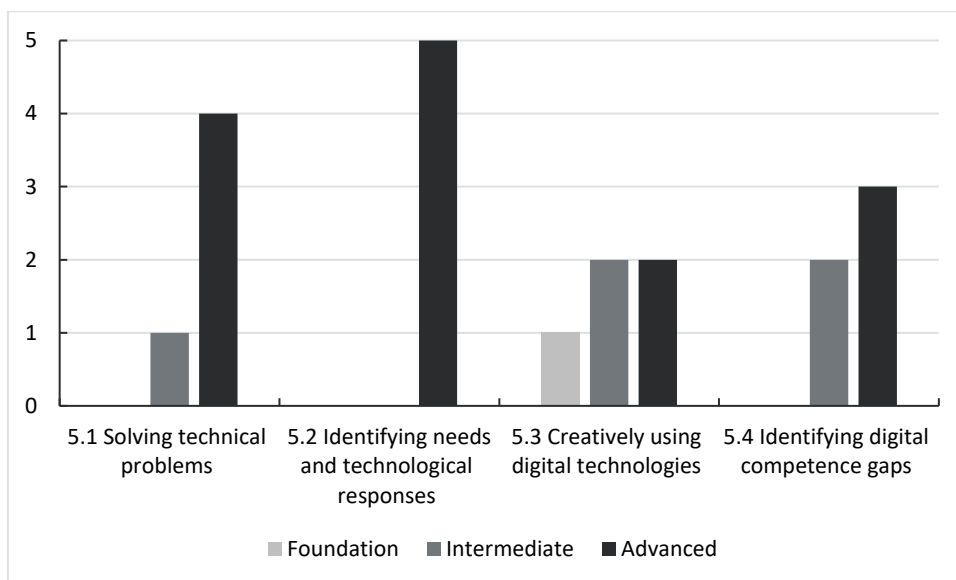
**Figure 4.** Level of digital competences of RightChallenge youth workers regarding Digital Content Creation domain.

Youth workers had lower levels of digital competences in the **Safety** Domain, being notably a higher prevalence of intermediate status, than advanced, in all subdomains (Figure 5.).



**Figure 5.** Level of digital competences of RightChallenge youth workers regarding Safety domain.

Finally, similarly to most domains, youth workers from RightChallenge had a higher prevalence of advanced digital competences in the **Problem Resolution** domain (Figure 6.). A higher gap was identified in the subdomain of using creatively **digital technologies** (Figure 6.).



**Figure 6.** Level of digital competences of RightChallenge youth workers regarding Problem Resolution domain.

## Relevance for Labor Context

All youth workers expressed the relevance of critical thinking and tiny habits in their work context. RightChallenge is an organization which aims the promotion of Life-Long Learning as a means for social

inclusion and equal opportunities. Due to this aim, RightChallenge has worked with diverse disadvantaged and minority groups, such as Roma, individuals with functional diversity or/and with different ethnicities, NEETs, elders and migrants. Participants expressed the importance of critical thinking in their work context, to, foremost, break the paternalistic and ableist social views of diversity and to treat everyone equally. In second, critical thinking was viewed as relevant within organization to prevent project results reasoned in misinformation, disinformation and malinformation, and sustained in prejudice and dominant narratives.

## Conclusion

An open and interconnected world was one of the main drivers of Internet, as to bridge knowledge gaps and promote learning of those in most disadvantaged situations (Leshner et al., 2022). However, Internet, as much as it promotes learning and information, it also conduits disinformation and untruths (Leshner et al., 2022). As untruths are spread easily and faster than reliable information, and migrants seem to depend highly in digital and online information to be integrated within the host country, it is critical the development of critical thinking and digital competences to challenge malinformation in this group.

This report shares the main results on the needs, perceived relevance and knowledge of youth workers within RightChallenge, regarding the terms of *critical thinking*, *tiny habits* and *digital competences*. The goal was to identify perceived gaps and facilitators for critical thinking and the relevance of a capacitation training concerning the key-concepts beforementioned for their roles within the organization. As an organization that works with minorities, critical thinking was viewed by our youth workers as a significant and necessary process for deconstructing and breaking dominant narratives that follow minorities. These perceptions translate into efforts from RightChallenge workers in engaging direct participation from minorities in the collection, analysis and dissemination of results, so as to have access to their narratives, stories, realities and perceptions. As demonstrated by our youth workers, flexibility and critical thinking are two components viewed as necessary to be developed and present in staff members. Furthermore, one of facilitators for critical thinking, as mentioned by Right Challenge youth workers, was indeed the access, availability and openness to diverse information and experiences. These perceptions are aligned with the expected to be developed results of the Erasmus+ “Digital4All – Building a Digital Word for All”, which include a capacitation training, targeted to youth workers, to train their abilities in enhancing critical thinking of migrants using participatory and qualitative approaches.

Moreover, our youth workers identified motivation as a significant challenge for critical thinking and for questioning information online. This result highlights the need to work psychological factors, such as motivation and short-term rewards, as baseline processes that sustain the development of habits, and therefore, the need to incorporate in the capacitation training of the Digital4All project, motivational approaches and strategies, so to fully promote migrant’s engagement with critical thinking practices of evaluating information online.

In conclusion, ***you can’t make an omelet without eggs***. Motivation is an engaging psychological and internal state that orients behavior towards a goal and although it depends on biological (i.e., level of arousal) and individual (i.e., preferences, interests) roots, it is also impacted by the surrounding environment. In this sense, not only must the individual be interested in attaining a given goal or performing a specific activity, but other environmental issues must be advanced and guaranteed,



namely conditions that support self-efficacy, knowledge and autonomy (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In the context of Digital4All project and goals, motivational conditions must be assured to fully transform a critical thinking intentional behavior (i.e., “*I want to adopt critical thinking strategies in evaluating information online*”) to action.

## References

Leshner, M., H. Pawelec and A. Desai (2022). *Disentangling untruths online: Creators, spreaders and how to stop them*. OECD Going Digital Toolkit Notes, No. 23. OECD Publishing, Paris. <https://doi.org/10.1787/84b62df1-en>.

Ryan, R.M., & Deci, E.L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development and well-being. *The American Psychologist*, 55(1), 68-78. <https://doi.org/10.1037//0003-066x.55.1.68>.

# Annexes

## Annex 1.



<https://digital4all-project.eu/>

### Digital4All – Building a Digital World for All

#### Activity 2.1. “Capacity Building for Youth Workers”

09/10/2023, Oporto

#### Signing in-Sheet

Name	Youth Worker Role	E-mail	Signature
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Marcos Costa	Project Manager	marcos@rightchallenge.org	<i>Marcos Costa</i>



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Figure 7. Signed In sheet.

