# DIGITAL 4 ALL

BUILDING A DIGITAL WORLD FOR ALL

# WP2 – Youth Worker Training

*A.1. Youth Workers Needs Assessment*

*Report from Germany*
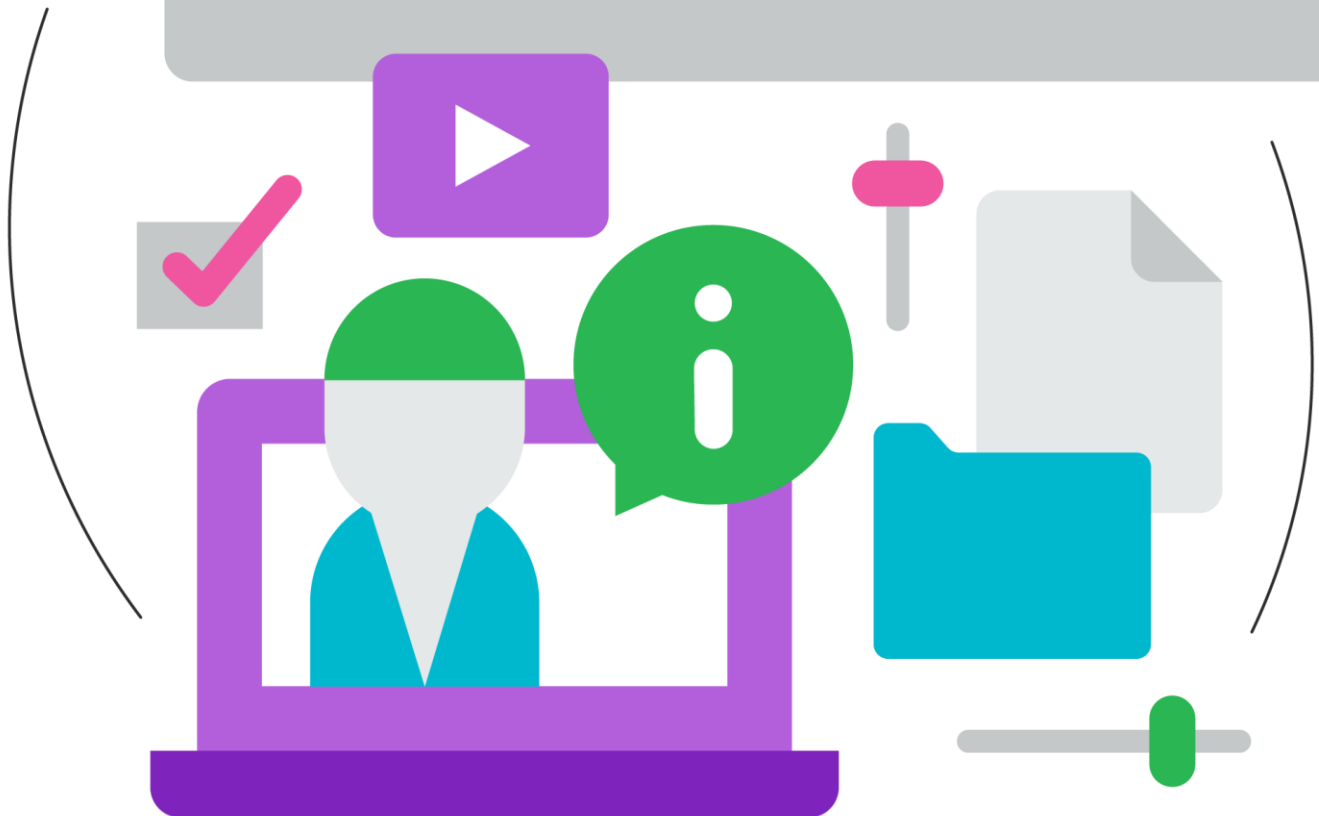
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# Introduction

Living in the still early 21$^{st}$ century, information technology poses challenges and opportunities on a scale not seen before and has an impact that is more visible and felt than ever. Combined with the many crises of the 2010s and 2020s, information echo chambers and misinformation in particular bring the need for widespread media literacy to the forefront. Here, the capacity to critically reflect on the world that surround us becomes a cornerstone of navigating today's media and information landscape.

The topic of critical thinking can be used in numerous situations in everyday life. Often the question is whether an emotional reaction blocks rational deliberation in certain contexts. In particular, when different cultures clash, such situations can occur, reinforcing conflict potentials of different individuals. In addition, media and reporting do not always have to be fact-based. Thus, in times of wars and unrest that force people to leave their homes, it is all the more important to find one's way in unfamiliar or even uncomfortable situations. Here, critical thinking should help people to find their way in these difficult conditions. One goal is to encourage adolescents or young adults in particular to question or examine sources of reporting and to reflect on their own perceptions and reactions.

# Methodology

These results are based on a survey that was divided into 3 different phases. The first phase determines the current state of knowledge on topics in the areas of critical thinking, digital competencies and Tiny Habits. In the second phase, participants complete 2 self-tests on the topics of digital competencies https://mydigiskills.eu/test/ and creative thinking https://www.skillsyouneed.com/quiz/979666. In addition, they watch a short and concise video on the aspects and benefits of the "4C's" What are the 4Cs? - YouTube . In the third phase all participants (who have worked out the previous phases on their own) come together in a round. Interesting results are taken up and openly discussed. In phase 3, the goal is to determine which approaches and methods within youth work are best suited to promote critical thinking.

## Participants

The phases and outcomes mentioned below were developed with KulturLife program supervisors. They have an average age of 32.2 years and have been working with youth within the exchange abroad program for approximately 1 year.

**Phase 1:** Survey. This aimed to obtain a categorization of the participants' level of knowledge on the various topics. The list of questions:

- What do you understand by critical thinking?
- What specific aspects do you think belong to critical thinking?
- Do you think that the use of critical thinking is important? If so, in what contexts?
- What do you think is necessary to practice critical thinking?
- Do you think critical thinking is a skill that can be learned? If so, what methods might be appropriate?

- Have you heard of the "Tiny Habits" approach? If so, what do you understand by it?
- In your opinion/experience, are there appropriate methods within youth work to establish new/good habits?
- What do you understand by "digital literacy?"
- How would you rate your own "digital literacy"?

**Phase 2:** In this phase, the participants had the task of completing the two self-tests. The results for the Digital Competencies test can be found in the appendix. In addition, the participants completed the creative thinking test.

Furthermore, the participants were informed about how the Tiny Habits method works. They were also asked about whether they could imagine using the method to establish other habits or achieve goals.

**Phase 3:** Group discussion that focused on the content worked on in phases 1 and 2. The results are explained in more detail in the Conclusion.

# Results

### Critical Thinking

The results of the Digital Literacy test can be found in the Annex. The average score on the Creative Thinking test is 91. Results from the Phase 1 survey can be found in the Annex. In general, the scores were high, and provided valuable insights and cause for reflection to the participating youth workers.

### Tiny Habits

Initial impressions of Tiny Habits vary widely. Some can imagine using the method and say that this principle is considered helpful. Others do not find the approach appealing for their own use. In the discussion round of phase 3 it turned out that Tiny Habits can be a suitable method to promote critical thinking after all. However, it is seen as a prerequisite tool that cannot be used by everyone. Especially in contexts where there is less prior knowledge or interest, Tiny Habits does not seem to be suitable as an entry method. Similarly, the question of effectively using tiny habits to tackle larger-scale social/societal problems remains open. A more detailed explanation can be found in the Conclusion.

### Digital Competences

The results of the digital competences varied among the participating youth workers based on their personal habits and preferences. On average, the youth workers showed an intermediate level of skills across the four skill categories, and an on average advanced level in communication and collaboration skills. The details of the skill-evaluation can be found in the Annex.

# Conclusion

In phase 3, the discussion round with all participants, the method of **Tiny Habits** was acknowledged as generally suitable to promote critical thinking among young people and adults. However, the method depends at least in part on personal proclivities towards self-improvement, while more complex behavioural changes were deemed to have the highest chance of success if participants had already made positive experiences with less complex Tiny Habits. Preliminary work would have to be done first to work out the aspiration to promote one's own critical thinking. Its usability therefore is dependent on the complexity of the proposed change and on the amount of time that can be dedicated to it in the given educational context. and is therefore unsuitable for beginners.

**Empathy:** During the discussion, it was noted that especially becoming aware of one's own feelings and being able to take a different point of view is prior to critical thinking. To promote these attributes, role-playing seems to be an appropriate method.

**Role plays**: These can be practiced in different ways and with varying intensity and scale. For example, the type of role play done with a group depends on the length of time the participants spend together. The longer the period, the better participants can get to know each other, and the more trust can be built between them. For shorter meetings, simpler games and thought experiments are more suitable. For each type of role play, it was noted that debriefing with participants is of key importance. Here, after the finishing of the role playing, the goal and purpose of the given exercise are explained to the participants and put in context with the overall topics and goals of the event. This gives them the opportunity to reflect on their experiences and evaluate them in a larger framework.

# References

Fogg, Brian J. *Tiny habits: The small changes that change everything*. Eamon Dolan Books, 2019.

European Commission, Joint Research Centre, Vuorikari, R., Kluzer, S., Punie, Y., *DigComp 2.2, The Digital Competence framework for citizens – With new examples of knowledge, skills and attitudes*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2022,

Masyhud, Masyhud. "LIFE SKILL EDUCATION (LSE) IN NON-FORMAL EDUCATION SETTING." *EDUCAFL: Journal of Education of English as Foreign Language* 2.1 (2019): 44-50.

# Annex

- 1. responses to the survey from phase 1

**What do you understand by critical thinking?**
My understanding of critical thinking is that you question things when you think about certain things.

**What specific aspects do you think belong to critical thinking?**
Aspects for me would be, among other things, to "process" facts with a kind of pros and cons list, so that one can weigh the facts if necessary. In addition, a certain foresight is not wrong and an exchange of opinions with others. This often gives you new food for thought or makes you rethink your own thoughts.

**Do you think that the use of critical thinking is important? If so, in what contexts?**
Yes, definitely. It is probably quite often important, especially in emotional decisions (especially personal) or e.g. at work, whether everything "works"/makes sense in the long run.

**What do you think is necessary to practice critical thinking?**
Own experience, foresight & "thinking outside the box", therefore also a certain curiosity/interest or (depending on the situation) a certain "emotional" relationship to the issue.

**Do you think critical thinking is a skill that can be learned? If so, what methods might be appropriate?**
As my vocational school teacher used to say so well back then: Yes and no. 😂
So on the one hand rather a no, because interest in topics or a bond must exist to some extent, because otherwise you would not spend so much time / thought to deal with such a topic. On the other hand yes, e.g. a pro and contra list or questions consider to the questioning of the topic, if necessary "what if" sentences consider, in order to extend the "horizon in this regard".

**Have you heard of the "Tiny Habits" approach? If so, what do you understand by it?**
No, I haven't heard anything in this regard.

**In your opinion/experience, are there appropriate methods within youth work to establish new/good habits?**
Unfortunately, I have little experience in this regard.

**What do you understand by "digital literacy?"**
By this I mean having the ability to "stay in" the digital world, "work with it," "try it out," and "research it" - but always with a certain amount of caution.

**How would you rate your own "digital literacy"?**
In school grades, I would probably give myself a 2-3. There is definitely room for improvement. Of course, it always depends a bit on the subject matter.

- **What do you understand by critical thinking?**
The ability to question one's own and others' views by evaluating information apart from personal convictions.

**What specific aspects do you think belong to critical thinking?**
A critical basic attitude, empathy, interest, time.

**Do you think that the use of critical thinking is important? If so, in what contexts?**
Yes. For personal development, better problem solving/solution finding, a better way of working together.

**What do you think is necessary to practice critical thinking?**
Openness/open-mindedness, interest, active listening, self-reflection, time for reflection and questioning.

**Do you think critical thinking is a skill that can be learned? If so, what methods might be appropriate?**
Yes, but you have to be open and interested, be willing to develop yourself further and also be able to see that your own approach may not be the only way. Unfortunately I do not know any methods.

**Have you heard of the "Tiny Habits" approach? If so, what do you understand by it?**
?

**In your opinion/experience, are there appropriate methods within youth work to establish new/good habits?**
? I have little idea about youth work. Start a challenge in a group with a reward, e.g. via an app (collect kilometers run, bike instead of bus...).

**What do you understand by "digital literacy?"**
Knowing your way around the digital world.

**How would you rate your own "digital literacy"?**
Very low

- **What do you understand by critical thinking?**
Do not believe every source/statement directly - check first, etc.
**What specific aspects do you think belong to critical thinking?**
Check author, topicality, website, etc. (first briefly "pause").
**Do you think that the use of critical thinking is important? If so, in what contexts?**
In any case, with messages, simple WhatsApp chats (Fake News danger), with advertising of any form
**What do you think is necessary to practice critical thinking?**
First of all, raise awareness, if possible always as a first step "think about it first".
**Do you think critical thinking is a skill that can be learned? If so, what methods might be appropriate?**
Yes definitely, through practice, create awareness of it
**Have you heard of the "Tiny Habits" approach? If so, what do you understand by it?**
Actually not
**In your opinion/experience, are there appropriate methods within youth work to establish new/good habits?**
Again, more practice and awareness in general I would think
**What do you understand by "digital literacy?"**
Be able to use digital media/programs/devices, etc., be able to assess content in digital media
- **How would you rate your own "digital literacy"?**
Average to good (good midfield 😊)

**What do you understand by critical thinking?**
- Questioning opinions, information and points of view
- Examine points of view etc. from different perspectives
- Critical examination of one's own views and those of others

**What specific aspects do you think belong to critical thinking?**
- see above.

**Do you think that the use of critical thinking is important? If so, in what contexts?**
- Critical thinking is important, especially in the age of misinformation and disinformation, social challenges such as intercultural coexistence and integration, climate change, right-wing extremism.
- In the context of sharing opinions and information via social media in general.

**What do you think is necessary to practice critical thinking?**
- Knowledge of the fact that misinformation exists, for example
- Openness and general interest in social issues
- Personal maturity
- Critical ability
- I think that critical thinking can be learned.

**Do you think critical thinking is a skill that can be learned? If so, what methods might be appropriate?**
- Sensitization and education (e.g. about algorithms of social media - platforms) are important

**Have you heard of the "Tiny Habits" approach? If so, what do you understand by it?**
- No, the term is new to me.

**In your opinion/experience, are there appropriate methods within youth work to establish new/good habits?**
- Practice critical thinking with practical examples, e.g., adopt different perspectives through role-playing.
- Use social issues that are relevant to young people and that they themselves come into contact with or that affect them personally and appeal to them emotionally
- Work with real case studies that young people can identify with

**What do you understand by "digital literacy?"**
- On the one hand, the operation and use of digital media in everyday life (private and school / professional)
- On the other hand, the conscious use of digital media in connection with obtaining information, communication, etc.
- Distinction to the term "media competence" ??

**How would you rate your own "digital literacy"?**
- In everyday work, I use common digital media.
- Privately, I am rather reserved when it comes to using digital media, e.g. I use social media rather little.
- Nevertheless, I critically engage with social issues, e.g. listen to various podcasts and read foreign-language newspapers.

**What do you understand by critical thinking?**
The ability to think about situations / events and look at them from different angles, to question / reflect and not take for granted, and only then make an appropriate decision / answer / find a solution.

**What specific aspects do you think belong to critical thinking?**
To look at information objectively, to filter, to ensure reliability of the information one obtains (environment, media, etc.), impartiality, draw conclusions, intermediate check: Am I still on the right, objective path or have I overlooked something? Have the mental path or the solution secured?

**Do you think that the use of critical thinking is important? If so, in what contexts?**
In conflict situations, in situations that are e.g. characterized by peer pressure, gossip situations, actually in all situations in which one makes and/or evaluates decisions. No matter if private or professional context.

**What do you think is necessary to practice critical thinking?**
The ability to reflect, to be able to apply experiences gathered so far, objectivity or objectivity

**Do you think critical thinking is a skill that can be learned? If so, what methods might be appropriate?**
Quite. It needs to be trained. Role plays, seminars, maybe an app 😉.

**Have you heard of the "Tiny Habits" approach? If so, what do you understand by it?**
No. I suspect it's little habits that help or hinder when applied in a situation. But maybe also small tricks / tools / aids to give a different direction to one's own ways of thinking or to check one's thinking?

- **In your opinion/experience, are there appropriate methods within youth work to establish new/good habits?**
  In any case, in digital form - age- and need-appropriate.  Reflection / documentation of previous habits (keeping a diary) in order to observe one's behavior retrospectively and to take countermeasures if necessary. Seminars for young people on critical thinking, or even an app 😉

**What do you understand by "digital literacy?"**
Knowledge of digital tools/methods and the ability to use them in a variety of ways and in the best possible way.

**How would you rate your own "digital literacy"?**
On a scale of 1-10 at around 4 to 5

**What do you understand by critical thinking?**
Questioning supposed facts and opinions, even if they are taken for granted as correct.

**What specific aspects do you think belong to critical thinking?**
Always try to look at all sides
Consider all perspectives, question preconceived/intuitive assumptions.

**Do you think that the use of critical thinking is important? If so, in what contexts?**
Yes by all means! Especially in all political and socially relevant topics. But also in one's own communication as well as in interpersonal relationships, where one should also critically question one's own thinking and assumptions

**What do you think is necessary to practice critical thinking?**
Willingness to question one's own intrinsic assumptions, as well as facts and opinions presented to one.

**Do you think critical thinking is a skill that can be learned? If so, what methods might be appropriate?**
Absolutely. I think a lot of it is about asking questions to get people to think critically.
It's a matter of practice, once you get people to do it regularly, it's a no-brainer.

**Have you heard of the "Tiny Habits" approach? If so, what do you understand by it?**

no

**In your opinion/experience, are there appropriate methods within youth work to establish new/good habits?**

no idea

**What do you understand by "digital literacy?"**

Can be related to both technical skills but, and I think that's what you mean, the ability to question things that are often displayed and presented in a filtered way on the internet, and thus appear unambiguous and single-perspective, and to know where one can possibly find and learn other perspectives on a topic.

**How would you rate your own "digital literacy"?**

Never practiced that much when it wasn't about topics important to me, relevant at that moment. But then actually good.