



WP2. Focus Group National Report

*A.3. Young Migrants Focus Group Analysis
Report from Cyprus*



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Introduction

The global expansion of the Internet has made knowledge and information accessible to almost everyone with a computer or smartphone, contributing to a more inclusive information landscape. This accessibility is particularly beneficial for marginalized groups, providing them with the opportunity to access pertinent information and engage in learning through informal channels. However, this widespread accessibility has also led to an increased dissemination of fake news and disinformation online. In an interconnected digital environment, effectively navigating the vast amount of daily information is crucial. Recognizing reliable sources becomes imperative for individuals to make well-informed choices in the realms of social, political and economic decisions, free from bias and malicious intent.

The Digital4All project is designed to empower youth workers with knowledge in critical thinking, tiny habits and digital competences to support migrants in improving their ability to evaluate online information. In the project's second phase, focus group sessions were conducted in each country by internal workers from partner organizations. These sessions aimed to assess the digital experiences, habits, preferences and strategies of young migrants related to online information navigation, critical thinking, and media literacy. This report focuses on the key findings regarding the obstacles and facilitators that influence safe access and responsible navigation through digital information, as perceived by young migrants residing in Cyprus.

Methodology

Participants

Five (5) youth migrants participated in this focus group (Appendix A.). From this sample four out of the five participants (75%) identify as females - whilst the remaining one participant (25%) identifies as male. The mean age for this group was 23.4. All five participants are originated from the Philippines and they are presently enrolled in college. Participants revealed that they have been in migration for either one or two months which perfectly aligns with the evaluation of the experiences of newly arrived young migrants.

In terms of recruitment, the method primarily used was the employment of the organisation network and partnerships. An informed consent was first introduced so participants would be aware of the

purpose of the focus group, confidentiality of the gathered information and the volunteer nature of their participation (Appendix B.).

Limitations

It is important to mention the limitations in conducting a focus group of this nature. The participants were all of the same nationality and solely represented the student migrant population. Thus, their experiences are to a great extent distinct compared to other migrant population groups. Each migrant population group is exposed to a different set of rights and obligations which shapes their experiences and perspectives. This was particularly evident in this focus group, where, although the questions were structured in a generic and open-ended manner to broadly cover key migration themes, the responses received deviated significantly from the presumed responses of a different migrant population group.

Measures and Procedure

Data collection was organized in two stages. The first phase included the collection of socio-demographic data using a Socio-Demographic Questionnaire. In effort to balance the characteristics of the final sample, it was asked participants the gender they identified with, nationality and the number of years that they have been in migration. The second phase focused on the facilitation of the focus group, where participants were instructed regarding of what could be expected from a focus group and from their performance. The focus group was organised in person, on the 27th of November 2023 at one of the participants' college seminar rooms in order to ensure familiarity with the environment.

Focus Group Moderation

The focus group was initiated with a brief informal discussion with the participants. The participants are peers hence there was already familiarity and comfort with one another. The brief discussion involved of a couple of questions regarding participants' studies and future plans. The activity was followed by the focus group discussion of key-questions on the basis of the project's aim (digital literacy, critical thinking competencies, strategies in identifying reliable information online). During the focus group, data were recorded in minute format with the assistance of a colleague.

As migrants, what were the main difficulties you expected and encountered in moving to a new country?

What were the main tools and methods you used to obtain information on how to overcome these obstacles?

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| What were the main tools and methods you used to obtain information on how to overcome these obstacles? |
| What were the main barriers you found in the online access to these types of information? |
| Did you ever encounter disinformation or fake news online during this search for information? In what cases? |
| What strategies do you often use to prevent the consumption of disinformation or fake news online? |
| Can you think of any factors that makes it difficult for you to do an evaluation of information online? |
| What are your thoughts on developing a training program on digital literacy and critical thinking regarding the assessment of information online for migrants? |
| What are some barriers that you can find in participation of migrants in this training program? |

Results

The focus group discussion was centered around five (5) themes: I. Experiences of Migration, II. Access to Information, III. Experiences of Disinformation and Fake News, IV. Evaluation of Online Information and V. Perspectives on the Digital4All Training Program.

Experiences of Migration

Participants were prompted to share their experiences as newly arrived migrants in Cyprus. It was observed that arriving in Cyprus with a student visa status and the enrollment in a college minimized the uncertainty of migration due to the support the participants received through their academic institution. Nonetheless, the following obstacles relating to migration were observed:

- **Language:** This was described as the main difficulty for all five (5) participants - and is the case for most newly arrived migrants. Even though participants are in the process of learning the national language this is solely at a basic communication level. Participants reported that information online is often inaccessible due to the fact that it is often in Greek. Furthermore, simple bureaucratic tasks, such as filling a form, can be far from straightforward for migrants due to the fact that there is often no English version of those.
- **Transportation and Navigation:** Another difficulty for young migrants was navigating themselves through the complex transportation system. Participants reported that even though there is information online relevant to transportation and navigation this remains a challenge for them.

- **Paperwork and Bureaucracy:** Participants have also discussed that simple bureaucratic procedures are lengthy and over-complicated in the case of migrants. Participants reported having their original documentation overhauled and experiencing differential treatment. Participants agreed that a better understanding of their rights and obligations is essential in order to better respond to similar situations in the future.
- **Socialization and Mingling with Locals:** Making friends and connections in a place with different cultural norms feels like stepping into uncharted territory. Not surprisingly, most of the respondents have experienced difficulties in connecting with locals and are often met with hesitancy and reservations.

Access to Information

Participants were prompted to share the means they employ in terms of obtaining information relevant to their integration in a foreign country. Participants unanimously disclosed that they consume information obtained primarily on social media and the official government web pages. This finding is not surprising considering that reliability on online social media is becoming the norm. Furthermore, participants disclosed that they often obtain information through their social networks and community in the country. Their experiences, and developed wisdom, has been reported to be very helpful.

Participants were also prompted to share the main barriers they have encountered when accessing information online. Once again, the main reported obstacle is information being often presented in Greek - which significantly hinders its accessibility to this group. Nonetheless, participants reported that government web pages ultimately provide them with all the information they might need. It is important to note that the perceived experiences of this target group might be largely influenced by their legal status and the lack of ambiguity surrounding that. Furthermore, enrollment in college has been identified to be an important protective factor for these young migrants.

Experiences of Disinformation and Fake News

Participants were questioned about the experience of disinformation and fake news when accessing information online. The results of this prompt were rather surprising with none of the participants being able to recall the incidence of such ever since their arrival in the country. This finding can be viewed and evaluated from a set of different angles. The limitations of this focus group should be once again stressed - alongside the distinct experiences of different migrant populations. It has been observed that this particular migrant population group is associated with a number of protective factors - namely the college enrollment and the support received by the institution, the student status

and the competencies associated with this role, and even the nationality of the participants (i.e., one of the respondents has shared that critical thinking was taught at school back in the Philippines). A brief 1:1 discussion which followed with the Director of the college confirmed that the institution has over time established truthfulness regarding certain misconceptions and glamorization of moving to Cyprus - and living in Europe. Hence, such incidents of disinformation and fake news are indeed rarer. Nonetheless, it is still worth questioning the accuracy of this result and the possibility of an overestimation of one's competences - known as the Dunning - Kruger Effect.

Evaluation of Online Information

Participants were also questioned about the methods they employ when coming across information that does not appear to be accurate or truthful. This section was somewhat redundant considering the unanimous inexperience with disinformation and fake news in the newly arrived country. Nonetheless, respondents have shared that as a general principle they try to cross check information - especially if it appears to be unreliable - and rule out any inconsistencies they may encounter.

Perspectives on the Digital4All Training Program

It was important to address the expectations of a training program which ultimately endeavors to benefit young migrants. Generally, all participants approached with positivity the development of a training program on critical thinking, digital literacy and motivation strategies. They were all able to understand the potential of such training program. The expectations mainly expressed by participants centered around making such training accessible to young migrants - as often these initiatives fail to reach their target groups. Hence, it is important that this training program reaches organisations and institutions closely working with migrant populations. Furthermore, participants have stressed the importance of a self-paced training program - adaptive to the trainees' distinct competencies and limitations. Finally, participants have once again expressed that language is an important element and that such training programs should at the very minimum be accessible in English.

Conclusions

The focus group aimed to enhance the consortium's understanding of the primary needs and facilitators in online information consumption among young migrants. Given the widespread use of digital and online tools by young migrants in Cyprus, the Digital4All project's emphasis on digital competencies is of high salience. The challenges faced by the participating migrant sample reflect universal issues experienced by migrant populations, with online tools identified as central facilitators

for accessing relevant migration information. Furthermore, the insights gained from the focus group contribute valuable context for tailoring the Digital4All project to address the specific digital needs and challenges encountered by young migrant populations.

While participants highlighted structural factors contributing to the inaccessibility of reliable information, they also presented unique protective factors related to legal status, student identity, and nationality within the participating sample. It prompts consideration of how experiences and responses might differ if the identified group were newly arrived applicants for international protection of African descent. Additionally, acknowledging and understanding these protective factors is crucial for designing targeted interventions that recognize and leverage the strengths and assets of young migrants, enhancing the overall effectiveness of the Digital4All project in Cyprus and across the consortium.

The Digital4All overall aim, and expected results, appear to fully align with the needs of young migrants in Cyprus. The insights from the focus group underscore the significance of tailoring the training program to address the specific challenges and preferences of this demographic, ensuring a comprehensive and impactful approach to enhancing their digital competencies and information-seeking practices.

Annexes

Appendix A.

| Full Name | Email | Organisation | Signature |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| HAZEL MAY BORLUNG SALLACAY | hazelmayallsacay05@gmail.com | CASA COLLEGE STUDENT | <i>[Signature]</i> |
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Appendix B.



Focus Group Consent Form for Erasmus Plus KA2 Project

Project Name: Building a Digital World for All (Digital4All)

Project No: 2022-2-DE04-KA220-YOU-000097932

Research Project Aim: Promoting digital and media literacy in migrants and fostering their competences to critically and efficiently evaluate information online.

Moderator: Iro Nestoros

Date and Place of the Focus Group: 27.11.2023 - Nicosia (Cyprus)

Estimated Duration: 2 Hours

Risks: There are no risks associated with your participation, but you have the right to stop or withdraw from the focus group at any time.

Advantages: Your participation is highly valuable for the quality and the impact of our results.

Confidentiality: The focus group is intended to be confidential, and all efforts have been made to ensure confidentiality. For the purpose of producing reliable results, the focus group meeting needs to be photographed. Any transcripts produced, if disseminated, will be done in a manner where no identifiable characteristics are revealed. Visual images will only be shared in websites or events if you consent to it.

Data Protection: Only the partner's organizations will have access to the transcripts and visual recording of the focus group meeting. This information will be available for the two years of the project, but after that, it will be eliminated.

Voluntary Nature: The participation in this questionnaire is voluntary.

If you have any questions you can contact Iro Nestoros through the following e-mail: iro.nestoros@cardet.org.





Please check the box, if you agree to be photographed:

I agree

I do not agree

Please check the box, if you agree to be quoted with your name in our project material, after the consultation with you and with your agreement for the specific publication or other medium before publishing it:

I agree

I do not agree

Please check the box, if you agree to share your image in news articles, websites, project's social media, spoken presentations, feedback events or others.

I agree

I do not agree



