



WP2. Focus Group National Report

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



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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 Ukraine.

Methodology

Participants

We selected 5 youth migrants who are currently live in Dnipro (Ukraine) now and are internally displaced persons from the eastern regions of Ukraine who suffered from the war (Appendix A.).

The group included 5 women. Their average age was 21.4 years. The selection of participants was carried out using the publication of information on social networks and also contacting internally displaced persons through youth organisation .

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.

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 21th of November 2023 in one of the educational institutions in Dnipro.

Focus Group Moderation

The focus group discussion initiated with a “Break the Ice” activity to make participants more familiar and comfortable with each other. The activity comprehended of a couple of questions regarding sociodemographic information, personal interests, cultural characteristics and personal likings regarding their home and new country. The activity was followed by the focus group discussion of key- questions imposed by the facilitator, regarding the project’s aim (digital competences, motivational and critical thinking needs, strategies to find and identify reliable information online...).

Key questions:

- “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?”.
- “Were any of that information obtained online? What online means did you use?”.
- “What were the main barriers you found in the online access to these types of information?”
- “Did it ever happen to you to be deceived or misinformed online during this search for information? In what cases? What type of misinformed or erroneous information was present?” (Give examples if needed, such as images, statistics, overall text, deceiving title, ...).
- “What strategies do you often use to not be misinformed or deceived online?”.
- “How did you assess the adequacy and efficiency of this strategies accordingly to ‘achieved results’, ‘time’, ‘complexity’ and ‘feasibility’?”.
- “Can you think of any factors that makes it difficult for you to do an evaluation of information online?”.
- [“Did you ever feel that motivation was a barrier for you to proceed to an evaluation of information online? What are some possible reasons, in your experience, that may have led to this lack of motivation?”.
- “What are your thoughts on developing a training program on digital literacy, critical thinking and motivation strategies regarding the assessment of information online for migrants?”.
- “What are some barriers that you can find in participation of migrants in this training program? And in another note, what are some advantages in developing and participating in this program?”

Results

Experiences of Migration

Taking into account the fact that the participants are internally displaced persons and were forced to leave their places of residence in the first weeks of the war, their greatest fear arose when they thought about safety, since hostilities were taking place nearby.

The state and volunteers provided evacuation transport, and to a greater extent, the participants in this survey used this transport.

The first question after the evacuation was about where to live. Due to the huge number of refugees, government assistance did not allow them to accommodate everyone; as a rule, for the first time, people were accommodated in school gyms, student dormitories and other social institutions.

Further, the participants were faced with the fact that such housing could not provide them with a minimally comfortable standard of living for a long time, so the majority had to rent housing together with their families at their own expense.

The financial assistance program from the state per month per person was about 60 euros, which was not enough even for food.

It was relatively difficult for participants to find new jobs, since at that time all companies, anticipating uncertainty, cut costs and reduced staff. Therefore, in the first half of the year there were practically no vacancies.

There was an opportunity to receive humanitarian aid from various European funds, this assistance included food, clothing, and other means for household needs.

Volunteers were also active in terms of social and psychological assistance; the unification of society and the desire to help their fellow citizens were noticeable.

In general, this was a traumatic period that negatively affected the nervous system of the participants and the psychological state.

Access to Information

Participants noted that since they were in their own country, they had no problems translating information from the media; in general, they already had verified sources that they could use.

Some participants noted that since the beginning of the war, all television channels except one state channel were temporarily blocked. The opinions of the participants differed, as some believe that this is a restriction of freedom of speech; independent media were not able to convey alternative information; other participants believe that this forced measure at that time allowed us to avoid enemy propaganda.

The most used sources of information for the participants were social networks, telegram channels, bloggers, experts whom the participants trusted.

Participants noted that during the first year and a half, metamorphoses occurred with a number of sources, for example, opposition media, as well as those offering an alternative opinion, with the beginning of the war, took a joint position with the state agenda, most likely this was done to consolidate society and work for a common result. At the same time, after the first year of the war there was a noticeable return to opposition activities, alternative opinions appeared that did not coincide with government theses, and criticism appeared.

Due to hostilities, sanctions were applied to a number of sources or these sources were closed, citing anti-government activities, we can also talk about censorship.

In general, this period was extremely difficult, as there was a lot of misinformation and propaganda from various sources, and it was much more difficult for participants to find and select information and make sure that it was true.

Experiences of Disinformation and Fake News

Participants noted that there was much more false information and fakes, as the frequency of events increased, every day there were more and more tragic and resonant events, on this basis it became easier to throw in false information and mislead.

Participants reported experiencing this and being misled in some cases.

They noted that in order to increase the reliability of the information received, it was necessary to resort to as many sources as possible, paying attention to the detail of the facts, the logic of presentation, and reference to primary sources.

It has also been noted that the reason for the rapid spread of fake news is that it appeals to emotions, so they often contain strange statements or cause anger or fear.

Most often participants encountered:

- 1) Headings that do not further correspond to the text (Clickbait headings)
- 2) Low quality journalism
- 3) Dummy content
- 4) Bots and trolls on social networks

Perspectives on the Digital4All Training Program

The participants expressed high interest and desire to take part in the training course. Their goal and motivation coincides with the objectives of the course.

They also noted that this course will save a lot of time, since it will not be necessary to search for everything on various resources, and it will be possible to take the first steps in the above topics thanks to the course. This will provide additional motivation to the participants to encourage self-development and deepen their knowledge.

Also, if there is an opportunity to update and adapt the course during the next time, it will also be useful and ensure its sustainability to new challenges

It is important that it is written in an accessible language. They also noted that it is very important to spread information about such a platform and course so that as many people as possible have the opportunity to learn about this course.

Conclusions

A focus group conducted with young Ukrainians who are currently live in Dnipro (Ukraine) now and are internally displaced persons from the eastern regions of Ukraine who suffered from the war.

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Annexes

Appendix A.

**DIGITAL
4ALL**
BUILDING A DIGITAL
WORLD FOR ALL

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

Digital4All – Building a Digital World for All
Activity “Focus group”
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Appendix B.



