Research-based analysis of European youth programmes
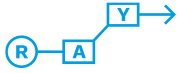
RESEARCH PROJECT ON THE ROLE OF DIGITALISATION IN YOUTH WORK AND NON-FORMAL LEARNING IN THE CONTEXT OF THE EUROPEAN YOUTH PROGRAMMES (RAY-DIGI)

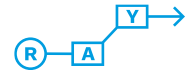# TURKISH NATIONAL REPORT

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Case studies exploring successful digital youth work
approaches, formats, methodologies and settings
within the context of the European youth programmes and beyond

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The RAY-DIGI research project explores the dimensions and impacts of digitalization within youth work and the European Youth Programs. It also examines the integration of digitalization into youth work and non-formal learning processes within the European Youth Programs. While digital youth work is attracting increasing attention, there are still various uncertainties regarding its implementation and its impact on young people's lives.

The COVID-19 pandemic has once again highlighted the necessity of digital education, bringing the need for digital skills in education and learning to the forefront. The primary aim of this research is to identify successful digital youth work approaches, formats, methodologies, and environments, and to provide recommendations for advancing digital transformation processes in youth work. The research aims to address the gap between the significance of digitalization in young people's lives and the practices of youth work. By systematically analysing successful digital youth work approaches, the study seeks to support youth workers, educators, institutions, and organizations in the process of digital transformation. As part of the study, four projects (case studies) from Türkiye were selected, and interviews were conducted with the project teams and participants of each project. Each case study provides detailed descriptions of the methodologies applied, project features, and participant experiences, offering insights into the fundamental educational aspects of digital youth work.

The RAY-DIGI research project emphasizes the importance of integrating digital environments and tools into youth work. The case studies in this report reveal effective strategies to enhance young people's digital skills, innovative thinking, social responsibility, and cultural awareness. The findings provide valuable insights and recommendations for youth workers, educators, and policymakers to support digital transformation. The results suggest that some steps can be taken for a healthy digitalization process in Türkiye. Some of the recommendations are as follows:

> • Developing comprehensive training programs on digital competencies and digital literacy for young people and youth workers,
> • Promoting collaboration between educational institutions and youth organizations during the digitalization process,
> • Ensuring easy access to digital tools, relevant technologies, and resources for disadvantaged youth, thereby minimizing the digital divide and inequalities,
> • Encouraging hybrid learning environments that combine digital and face-to-face learning methods in a balanced way,
> • Continuously evaluating digital youth work practices and adapting them to emerging new technologies, such as artificial intelligence,
> • Supporting new projects that enable the transfer of non-formal learning methods to digital environments (digital games, virtual reality glasses, digital tools, applications, etc.),
> • Identifying the needs of young people to produce data-driven projects and allocating more resources to digitalization projects.
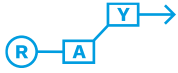
1. INTRODUCTION

Digital youth work has gained more policy attention and is increasingly practiced, but there's still a gap between its importance in young people's lives and its implementation in youth work. In February 2020, at the second European conference on youth work and digitalization, this gap was a key topic among policy, research, and practice. The pandemic highlighted this gap even more. Many youth work organizations struggled not only to move their work online temporarily but also to integrate meaningful digital aspects into their work with young people. This is not only a challenge for youth work and non-formal education, as the Erasmus+ Programme Guide for 2022 explains:
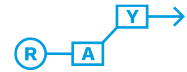
> *"The COVID-19 pandemic shed further light on the importance of digital education for the digital transformation that Europe needs. In particular, it emphasized the increased need to harness the potential of digital technologies for teaching and learning and to develop digital skills for all."*

Against that backdrop, the RAY-DIGI research project is exploring digitalisation systematically, analysing where and how the gap between digitalisation and youth work can be reduced, and developing recommendations on how to support youth workers, non-formal educators, young people and youth work organisations/networks in their processes of digital transformation.

The aim of our research project is to explore dimensions of digitalisation, document the progress of digitalisation in the European youth programmes, and develop recommendations to strengthen and support digital dimensions in youth work (RAY-DIGI).

The key objectives of our research project are to:

- explore aspects of digitalisation in young people's life of relevance for youth work, and approaches to integrate such aspects into youth work practice;

- explore national youth policies and strategies, as well as national youth work frameworks, and map their approaches to digitalisation in youth work;

- explore approaches to integrate digital environments into non-formal learning environments and analyse their strengths and weaknesses;

- explore hybrid learning environments and methodologies that mix and remix digital and analogue ways of learning and analyse their strengths and weaknesses;

- analyse the effects of exclusively digital, hybrid, and exclusively analogue learning environments on accessibility for young people with fewer opportunities;

- map the support needs of European youth work bodies, groups, networks and organisations for successfully engaging with digital and online youth work.

The core research questions of our research project are:

- What are the key gaps between the relevance of digitalisation in young people's life and its trailing translation into youth work practice, and how can they be reduced?

- What are the competences necessary for youth workers to add meaningful digital dimensions to their work with young people, and how can youth workers be supported to develop these competences?

- What are the competences necessary for youth workers to enable young people to competently deal with the digital dimensions of their lives, and how can youth workers be supported to develop these competences?

- How can youth work be supported to build and discover a unique character for non-formal learning in online environments?

One key component of the research project is the development of case studies at national level, exploring approaches to digital work with young people, including in the context of the European youth programmes but also from outside the youth sector, studying successful approaches, formats, methodologies and settings of digital youth work.

Each case study provided explanations and explorations of the applied approaches to digital work with young people. Collectively, all case studies aimed to identify key characteristics of digital youth work and digital non-formal education and learning.

Case studies selection process:

For this research project, we developed a shortlist of potential case studies, covering digital work with young people in the context of the European youth programmes and in the context of youth work more generally. The combined selection of case studies covered projects and initiatives that addressed digital work with young people as tools, activities, and content.

2. CASE REPORTS

2.1. CASE REPORT 1

2.1.1. KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PROJECT

Project description:

Key Action	Cooperation Among Organisations and Institutions
Action Type	Partnerships for Cooperation / Small-scale Partnerships in Youth
Goal(s)	to enhance software development, coding, game creation, and digital competencies among young people, fostering active citizenship, entrepreneurship, and teamwork skills
Theme(s)	Gamification, e-learning
Digital Activities	a boot camp for mobile game and scenario development
Output	Toolkit for young people and youth workers

2.1.2. SUMMARY PROJECT TEAMS

The interview with the project team involved 1 key member *(TM1)* from the project team. He is working at the international department of the organization and the project coordinator and responsible for all the aspects of the project.

2.1.2.1. EXPLORING THE PROJECT

The interview shed light on the multifaceted aspects of the project. The overarching aim is to foster both individual and collective **internationalization** perspectives. Notably, collaborations with partners from European countries have enriched the project's endeavours.

The project aligns with the coordinator's core focus areas, encompassing Mobility, Connectivity, Cybersecurity, Smart Cities, Design, and **Gaming**, all intricately linked to digitalization. For instance, the annual game camps, held twice under the organization's umbrella, serve as platforms where individuals, particularly the youth, showcase their abilities through activities like hackathons, leading to the development and commercialization of various applications.

*"**Games can be used in solving many problems**. Digitalization can occur through gaming. Engineering can become digitalized. In other words, you can create a game first and then produce its real-life counterpart." (TM1)*

A paramount motivation behind the project lies in facilitating internationalization, not only through foreign partnerships but also by attracting participation

from foreigners residing within the country, creating a fascinating dynamic. The success of the project is evident in its ability to cater to diverse participants, including those from non-digital fields such as architecture.

*"**The project was successful because a game is inherently enjoyable**. It can appeal to people from all walks of life, and there is even no age restriction. It addresses both a 15-year-old teenager and a 50-year-old adult." (TM1)*

Notably, the project's success is attributed to its entertaining nature, appealing to individuals of all ages. Furthermore, the **active involvement of decision-makers**.

The interview emphasized the versatility of gaming, illustrating its potential in problem-solving and digitalization across various fields. The project's success is further exemplified by its utilization of Erasmus+ opportunities, leading to the immediate initiation of new projects upon completion. **The enthusiasm for digitalization among the youth is evident**, with language proficiency in English identified as a primary challenge.

Language barriers and inadequate equipment pose challenges, yet efforts are made to address these issues, forging collaborations with companies to provide necessary tools and advocating for improved **English proficiency**. We conclude with a poignant call for equal dissemination of communication technologies to prevent regional disparities, highlighting the importance of communication in preventing societal divides and fostering national development.

2.1.2.2. EXPLORING DIGITAL YOUTH WORK

The interview provided insightful perspectives on the intersection of non-formal education and digital youth work. **Games emerged as a pivotal tool for youth development, offering an engaging alternative to traditional learning methods.** Especially children are very receptive to learning through play. Children learn through games both visually and auditorily, and this has become much easier.

"If I explain something to my child, it may be forgotten, but what they learn through gaming is never forgotten." (TM1)

The discussion acknowledged health risks associated with screen exposure, prompting proactive educational initiatives, particularly in safety and security awareness. At the same time the **digitization of non-formal learning** is crucial. As the name suggests, non-formal learning implies reaching more people, which is of great significance.

*"**Non-formal learning methods can be transferred to the digital environment.** There is nothing that cannot be digitized when it comes to digital. In fact, even physical activities requiring movement can be transferred to the digital realm through VR technologies." (TM1)*

Key digital competencies for youth were identified, **including practical problem-solving intelligence, proficiency in algorithmic thinking, and awareness of robotic coding principles.** These competencies were seen as essential for effective internet usage, enabling individuals to conduct efficient online searches. Recommendations were made to enhance visibility for both project teams and the Erasmus+ Programme. Urgency was emphasized for Erasmus+ to improve its

digital presence, addressing system-related challenges for healthy digitalization. Participants recognized Erasmus+ projects as valuable learning experiences.

"While Erasmus+ promotes healthy digitization in societies, it also needs to undergo healthy digitalization itself." (TM1)

Beyond Erasmus+ projects, there was a call for a national roadmap considering various youth work initiatives, education, **gamification, and smart city development**. Advocacy for nationwide workshops to gather input from diverse sectors aimed to formulate comprehensive strategies. Additionally, Erasmus+ was urged to initiate new calls and provide support specifically focused on digitalization. The interview also touched on the evaluation of learning approaches, acknowledging the advantages and disadvantages of hybrid learning. It recognized the impact of artificial intelligence on the ongoing digitalization process in various fields.

"Hybrid learning has both advantages and disadvantages. Humans are social beings and prefer to be together. However, online presence is also crucial. It provides many opportunities; for instance, our meetings are currently conducted via Zoom. Receiving theoretical knowledge beforehand and engaging in team activities physically proves to be very productive. That's why my preference is for a hybrid approach." (TM1)

The dual nature of hybrid learning, highlighting its benefits and drawbacks. It recognizes the inherent social aspect of humans, emphasizing a preference for in-person interaction. Yet, the significance of online presence is acknowledged, citing Zoom meetings as an example. The effectiveness of combining pre-learned theoretical knowledge with physical team activities is noted, leading to increased productivity.

2.1.3. SUMMARY PARTICIPANTS

The focus group was carried out with **2 project participants** *(PP1, PP2)* who attended the learning teaching and training activity held in the framework of the project. They are in the category of young people who participated in the activity.

2.1.3.1. EXPLORING THE PROJECT

The project is designed to create a fun and interactive atmosphere in a computer-based environment, encouraging participants to develop in the fields of gaming and software.

Participation in the project occurred initially without specific expectations in a setting where everyone was at their computers. The environment was observed to be both entertaining and educational. Rather than aiming for personal development in the gaming and software fields, the project's value in terms of interaction among people was recognized.

Participants defined **digitalization as the facilitation of existing tasks**. Elements such as getting rid of papers and reducing the need for physical materials were considered stages of digitalization. The participants noted that learning processes
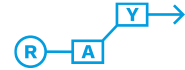
are faster and more effective through the internet, emphasizing that digitalization significantly streamlines operations.

"For me digitalization means the facilitation of the tasks easier than before we currently perform." (PP1)

"We can consider digitalization as a phase where we rid ourselves of papers and the physical items we used to carry." (PP2)

The advantages and disadvantages of digitalization within the project were discussed. Participants attributed the project's success to enthusiastic contributors, a conscious approach, and the project team's young age. However, it was pointed out that the positive aspects of digitalization outweigh its negative aspects.

***"Young people feel more liberated in the digital environment.** In this space, they believe they can do anything. Normally, when you go out on the street, you cannot do everything you want; there are certain strict rules. However, the digital environment is different. Young people should be more anonymous and freer in the digital space." (PP2)*

Challenges related to computer and internet access in Türkiye were highlighted. It was stressed that besides having qualified computers, attention should be given to the computer usage skills of young individuals. While the lack of awareness in security and privacy issues was criticized, it was also emphasized that this issue could be addressed through awareness-raising efforts.

"Information about digitalization should be provided in schools, especially in primary schools, and there should be lessons on this topic. Computer training should be given. We can even address some of the issues at school in a computerized environment." (PP1)

According to the participants in the focus group, to achieve healthy digitalization in Türkiye, **there is a need for a change in the education model and policies. Gamified learning, for example, might be a good option**, and perhaps different approaches should be explored.

The number of digitalization projects should be increased. Learning through games can be highly beneficial. For instance, a game was developed by the project participants in another project, where students solve problems, earning "coins" as they progress, and participants found it highly enjoyable.

2.1.3.2.   EXPLORING DIGITAL YOUTH WORK

The focus group delved into the experiences and perspectives of young individuals involved in the project. The conversation has covered diverse themes, including gamified learning, the impact of Erasmus+ projects, the significance of project participation, challenges in digital access, and proposed policy recommendations for enhancing digital youth engagement.

Participants unanimously highlight the **effectiveness of gamified learning**, especially in language acquisition. The consensus suggests that integrating gamification into education could revolutionize learning dynamics, offering a more engaging and self-driven approach.

The interview underscores the need for a **paradigm shift in traditional learning methodologies.** Experiential learning (under non-formal learning methods) is identified as a potent strategy, allowing individuals to transcend geographical and cultural barriers through digital platforms. Participants express enthusiasm for such approaches, emphasizing their effectiveness in enhancing practical skills and global perspectives.

"Experiential learning is one of the most effective methods of education. There might be many things we cannot experience in our normal lives. For instance, experiencing events in different countries could be a bit challenging. However, in digital environments, these barriers can be overcome." (PP1)

"On the other hand, the digitalization of Erasmus+ projects may bring various challenges. The primary purpose of Erasmus+ is to bring people together physically. For example, in our project, we had the opportunity to physically meet our European friends. We keep in touch, and a common question we often ask each other is, "When will you visit?"" (PP2)

The interviewees share their positive experiences with Erasmus+ projects, emphasizing the unique bonds formed during physical interactions with international peers. Challenges arise in maintaining these connections post-project, indicating a need for innovative solutions. Further exploitation of hybrid non-formal learning techniques combining online and face-to-face elements may foster maintaining connections between international peers post-project.
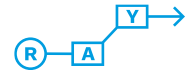
"We became like siblings in the project. The project was very meaningful. Especially, meeting foreign friends was an interesting and beautiful experience. There was a bit of shyness at the beginning, but later, we became like siblings. It was very difficult to part ways when the event ended. Different cultures, perspectives, and diverse individuals added a lot of richness. We even learned each other's languages. I also improved my English." (PP2)

Participation in the project is described as highly meaningful, fostering deep connections and cross-cultural understanding. The language development aspect, particularly in English proficiency, is highlighted. Beyond language, the multifaceted engagement of youth in activities like gaming, media analysis, and interactive tools enriches their skills and perspectives.

In the digital realm, young people commonly use platforms such as Discord, Google Meet, Zoom, X, and Instagram for communication. Additionally, they actively engage with tools like Padlet, Canva, and Kahoot. Currently, they are using ChatGPT for communication. These platforms, especially, play a significant role in assignments, research, and even coding endeavours. Moreover, they make use of ChatGPT's tools for various other purposes.

Challenges related to digital access, including **the quality and affordability of computers and slow internet in university settings,** are discussed. The interviewees stress the importance of improved nationwide internet access and policies that ensure the affordability of quality computers. They advocate for a politically unbiased educational environment that prioritizes equitable access.

2.1.4. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Both the project team and the youth involved are aware of the **significance of digitalization.** Being actively engaged in a digitization project, they are enhancing their knowledge and experience in this domain. Internationalization is a crucial source of motivation for both groups within the context of digitization. Erasmus+ projects not only facilitate internationalization but also strengthen the vision of the project team, which already focuses on digitization.

Creating a network is a pivotal motivation for both groups. However, while the **youth approach digitization with some scepticism, they are not afraid of it; on the contrary, they express a desire to socialize while engaging in digitization.** The project teams are not as sensitive as the youth regarding this aspect, but they also recognize the importance of socialization and learning in the same environments.

Both the youth and the project teams unanimously agree that non-formal learning methods can be digitized. Although they are aware of specific challenges, they believe these challenges can be overcome. **They acknowledge that digital learning can sometimes be more effective than physical learning, or vice versa.** Both groups emphasized the necessity for digital youth work to be enjoyable and entertaining, fostering satisfaction among young people. The significance of integrating both online and offline activities was underscored, with both groups expressing a preference for a blend of digital and face-to-face youth work. In this regard, they express a strong preference for an actively evaluated hybrid model. Both groups firmly believe in the effectiveness of gamification for facilitating easier learning, and they are aware of examples illustrating this concept.
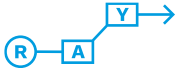
In the process of healthy digitization **in Türkiye, various inequalities may arise.** Especially in terms of Internet access and access to quality computers, young people may face geographical and economic difficulties. Additionally, insufficient digital literacy skills pose a challenge. The project teams have developed quick solutions in this regard, but these solutions are not sustainable. Therefore, policymakers have a crucial role in addressing these issues.

2.1.5. CONCLUSION

Drawing insights from the two focus groups, several key aspects have come to light. Both young participants and youth workers expressed **profound inspiration and motives for engaging in digital youth work**. For the youth, the allure of **international collaboration, fun, and enjoyable learning experiences were highlighted**, while the youth workers (project leader in this case) were motivated by the potential of **digitalization to enhance non-formal education** and create impactful learning environments.

The impact of the digital realm on non-formal education and digital youth work emerged as a significant theme in the discussions. Participants recognized the transformative role of digital tools in shaping educational approaches**, emphasizing the need to strike a balance between online and offline activities**. The success of digital youth work was attributed to key factors such as the creation of safe and enjoyable spaces, the integration of gamification for effective learning, and fostering international connections through the opportunities of Erasmus+ projects as a networking platform.

Non-formal education and its intersection with digital youth work were explored, revealing a consensus on the adaptability of traditional learning methods to digital platforms. The groups acknowledged the potential of digitalization to address challenges in non-

formal education and recognized the need for policy interventions to ensure equal access and enhance **digital literacy skills**.

Discussions also delved into the digital life and needs of young people, emphasizing the importance of understanding and integrating their preferred digital communication channels like Discord, Zoom, and social media platforms into youth work practices. The insights gleaned from these discussions offer a comprehensive view of the current state and the envisioned future of digital youth work, where ongoing challenges in internet access, digital security and digital literacy skills are identified as focal points for improvement and policy intervention.

Ensuring the needs of young people are heard is crucial for a healthy digitalization process. It is believed that **if all institutions in Türkiye establish digitalization units, a more integrated and healthy digitalization could take place.** Additionally, concerns were raised about how digital inequalities might lead to various divisions and challenges within society. One notable strength of the project lies in its robust emphasis on the potential of digital environments in non-formal education processes.

2.2.   CASE REPORT 2

2.2.1. KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PROJECT

Project description:

Key Action	Cooperation Among Organisations and Institutions
Action Type	Partnerships for Cooperation / Cooperation partnerships in youth
Goal(s)	to encourage young people's sense of initiative and youth entrepreneurship, including social entrepreneurship, by conducting needs analysis to identify and evaluate the needs of the elderly and their families
Theme(s)	Age friendly societies, social entrepreneurship
Digital Activities	Creating a mobile software
Output	Mobile software on healthy aging and elderly care, a guidebook, promotional films, and a website

2.2.2. SUMMARY PROJECT TEAMS

The focus group with the project team involved **2 project team members** *(TM1, TM2)* of the implementation team, respectively the trainers. They are at the same time young youth workers.

2.2.2.1.   EXPLORING THE PROJECT

This project emerged from the realization that the elderly is lagging in the digital world. This observation, supported by literature and personal experiences, serves as a significant motivation. The project focuses on providing assistance to elderly individuals in the community, aiming to bridge the digital divide.

The primary motivation for the project stems from the desire to contribute to the well-being of elderly individuals in the community. The team is driven by the goal of addressing the challenges faced by the **elderly in adapting to the digital era.** In the context of the project, **digitalization** is seen as a facilitator, bringing together various information in one application to simplify access for elderly users.

"As a youth worker, I generally worked with my peers, collaborating on various projects together. However, being able to touch the hearts of elderly individuals and demonstrate our care for them in this project has also provided us with spiritual satisfaction. This was profoundly meaningful and became a source of motivation for us." TM2

The digital aspect of the project revolves around a **mobile application designed** based on the needs analysis of the elderly. The software company involved has streamlined the development process, emphasizing user-friendly features such as larger font sizes and accessible shapes.
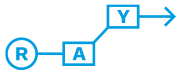
The project's intellectual outputs include a book, website, and mobile application. However, challenges exist in terms of software knowledge. Despite difficulties, the team is finding solutions to overcome these hurdles.

"Our project is successful because both the project team and participants have taken dedication of it as their own." TM1

Success in the project is attributed to **the strong dedication** to the project by both the project team and participants. The sense of responsibility and commitment has contributed to the project's overall success.

Challenges and concerns:

- Digital security is a paramount concern, leading to the decision to keep the software simple and open source. Membership aspects were removed to ensure **no personal information or data is collected**, addressing security concerns for elderly users.

- Challenges arise in international collaborations, with **difficulties noted in working with overseas partners.** While domestic partners can collaborate closely, international partnerships may face issues due to different perspectives on the project, particularly in viewing it more as a business.

- The project has had an impact beyond its primary goals, contributing to the personal growth of young participants. Creating **exercise videos for the mobile application** has not only aimed to promote physical activity among the elderly but has also enhanced the digital skills of the team members involved.

In conclusion, the project is making strides in creating a digital solution for the elderly, driven by a strong sense of social responsibility and a commitment to improving the lives of older individuals. The challenges faced, especially in international collaborations, highlight areas for further consideration and potential improvement.

2.2.2.2.   EXPLORING DIGITAL YOUTH WORK

The project strategically integrates non-formal learning methods, effectively digitizing non-formal education. However, challenges arose during the needs analysis, primarily due to the elderly target audience, making data collection and understanding their specific needs more difficult. The communication gap between the younger project team and the elderly participants (at the need analysis part of the project) further emphasized the complexities inherent in bridging generational divides.

On the topic of potential conflicts between **non-formal education and digital youth work,** the interviewee highlights the efforts to incorporate various learning methods, including puzzles and games, into a digital application. Despite the team's generation-spanning efforts, challenges emerged in translating ideas into software, particularly in discerning the digital needs of the elderly. The interviewee stresses the difficulty in obtaining clear answers during the needs analysis, underlining the importance of understanding the elderly's unique challenges in adapting to digital tools.

"Non-formal education can be transferred to digital formats. For instance, the station method can be implemented using the Jamboard platform, and rooms can be divided on Zoom. Therefore, it can be shifted to a digital medium. However,
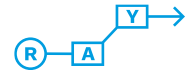
there are some limitations that come with it. For instance, individuals can write random notes on Google Jamboard, which can make control more challenging." TM1

During the interview, it was emphasized that **project budgets should be increased** to facilitate more comprehensive activities and to cover the high costs, particularly those arising from dissemination efforts. **Sustainability emerges as a significant concern**, with thoughts on updating the project in response to potential legal changes in the future. The interviewee recognizes the risk associated with sustainability, especially regarding server costs, suggesting that agencies supporting digital projects should **provide training and organize experience-sharing programs** for team members and participants.

"If you are a teacher and if you are preparing a poster in class, you are actually providing students with a glimpse and horizon into using digital tools in the future. You are becoming an example for your students." TM1

Furthermore, the interviewee discusses the challenges and potentials of digitizing non-formal education. While acknowledging that certain aspects of non-formal education can be transferred to a digital format, they express **reservations about complete digitalization.** The limitations of platforms like Jamboard, where control can become challenging, **highlight the need for a hybrid learning approach.** The interviewee foresees the importance of sustained efforts beyond the project duration, stressing the need for support for projects relying on servers.

In conclusion, the interview findings underscore the nuanced dynamics of digital youth work, emphasizing the challenges faced, the need for sustained support, and the importance of understanding the unique needs of the elderly in the digital landscape. The recommendations provided offer valuable insights for future projects in the realm of digital youth work.

2.2.3. SUMMARY PARTICIPANTS

At the focus group participated **7 young people** *(PP1, PP2, PP3, PP4, PP5, PP6, and PP7)* who participated in the project. Five of them are students from different majors and two of them are working in different sectors.

2.2.3.1. EXPLORING THE PROJECT

The project has been highlighted as serving a **meaningful purpose**, with the team being a crucial factor in its success. The synergy between project coordinators, trainers, and participants contributes to a positive atmosphere. The **quality of the team** is deemed essential, emphasizing the mutual support among team members.

Participants express a deep connection to the project's goals, considering it not just as a service but a personal endeavour. **The prospect of aging and the relatability of the project to their own lives serve as powerful motivators.** The sense of contributing to a project that benefits oneself in the future serves as a unique and motivating factor.

"The project serves a beautiful purpose, and it is successful. The real essence behind the success of any project lies within the current team. I believe the quality

of the team is crucial. We all support each other. There is a wonderful synergy among project coordinators, trainers, and participants." PP1

"In the project, everyone contributed more than what was expected. One day, we will also grow old. In this sense, this project is actually relevant to us as well. We can think of it as a project we've undertaken for ourselves. We are candidates for being elderly in the future. This serves as a beautiful source of motivation." PP6

Personal experiences of participants, especially living in a predominantly elderly community, highlight the impact of the project on **teaching essential digital skills**. Observing the challenges faced by the elderly, such as difficulty in reading texts and navigating smartphones, has been an eye-opener. The project is recognized for addressing these issues and enabling older individuals to perform activities like online shopping.

"I live in an apartment complex where most of the residents are elderly. Almost all my neighbours are over 65 years old. My most significant contribution to them is teaching them how to use the phones they use for communication with their families. This has added a lot to my life. It allowed me to witness the challenges elderly individuals face in using phones, such as difficulties in reading texts or not knowing how to double-click. Now, they can even shop online. This project created awareness on me to support elderly on digitalization process." PP1

The continuous development of elderly individuals in technology is noted, challenging the stereotype of them being overlooked in terms of technological advancements. The project is seen as a valuable contribution to bridging this gap and providing essential training for the older population. It is emphasized that the project fosters societal participation, enabling elderly individuals to both **embrace digitalization and actively engage in the community**.

In conclusion, the project is acknowledged for its positive impact, not only in providing **practical digital skills to the elderly but also in fostering a sense of community and societal inclusion**. The testimonials from participants highlight the significance of the team, personal motivation, and the societal contribution of the project.

2.2.3.2.   EXPLORING DIGITAL YOUTH WORK

The project significantly eased participants' lives, demonstrating the potential for simplifying various aspects through digitalization. The focus on Learning Teaching and Training (LTT) activities played a crucial role in contributing to their growth and experiences.

"The project is a digitalization initiative aimed at benefiting elderly individuals; however, ultimately, it is a youth project, and young people were at the centre of all our activities. For instance, in Learning Teaching and Training activities, young participants were actively involved. This allowed us to benefit from each other's experiences. The participating youth came from diverse disciplines, offering various perspectives. We learned different things, including law, psychology, and more. Our activities were conducted through brainstorming sessions and non-formal education methods." PP2

Although the project primarily aimed to benefit the elderly in digitalization, it remained a youth-centric initiative. Learning, Teaching, and Training activities involving young participants facilitated mutual learning experiences. Participants
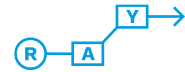
from diverse disciplines, such as law and psychology, brought different perspectives. Digital skills saw improvement, **with young people acquiring proficiency in tools like Canva, Adobe Premiere, Adobe InDesign, and Zoom.**

The project exposed participants to a variety of digital tools, **leading to increased digital literacy and proficiency**. Challenges, such as the resource-intensive requirements of programs like Adobe Premiere and InDesign and the absence of necessary equipment during presentations, highlighted potential conflicts. Nevertheless, participants acknowledged the overall growth in their digital competencies.

"I studied psychology and was quite distant from the digital field. However, through the activities we conducted in this project, especially working on the development of the application, I feel that I have truly progressed and developed significantly in the digital realm now." PP3

"I learned to work on the same document collaboratively and also acquired proficiency in Canva. Now, I have learned to engage in group work, take on leadership roles, and operate in digital environments. Additionally, we used SPSS in the needs analysis of the project. Although there is a course on SPSS at school, I gained the competence in this project that I couldn't acquire through the school course, and I am now applying this knowledge at school as well." PP1

Participants shared individual experiences of **personal and professional growth**. Examples included mastering Canva, learning to collaborate on digital platforms, and utilizing statistical analysis tools like SPSS for needs analysis. The project also provided hands-on experiences in video production, improving skills in areas such as lighting techniques and video shooting.

"Within the scope of the project, we developed our skills in terms of how to shoot a video, the use of various methods for lighting, and similar aspects related to video recording. In this context, while we have some prior knowledge, we are learning as we engage in the practical aspects of the work. For instance, there are online physiotherapy services with many advantages. However, it's important to note that there are different effects when it comes to physical touch." PP6

In conclusion, the project not only **developed digital skills** but also fostered a collaborative and learning-oriented environment. The participants demonstrated growth in various digital tools, emphasizing the practical application of skills learned during the project. The exploration of potential conflicts highlighted the need for **resource management and adaptability in digital youth work**.

2.2.4. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The comparative analysis of the two focus groups reveals both shared perspectives and nuanced differences in their experiences with the project. Commonalities include the acknowledged enhancement of digital skills, the cultivation of a collaborative learning environment, and the practical application of acquired skills in real-world scenarios. Both groups highlight the significance of challenges in digital youth work, emphasizing the **need for resource management and adaptability**.

However, a distinct contrast emerges in the primary focus of the two groups. The first group (team members) places a spotlight on the project as a youth initiative, underlining the role of young participants in the collaborative and learning-oriented environment. In contrast, the second group (project participants) perceives the project as **a digitalization**

initiative aimed at benefiting elderly individuals. This variance in focus reflects differing priorities and perspectives within the project.

Another noticeable difference lies in the specifics of digital skill development. While both groups celebrate the growth in digital proficiency, the tools and methods emphasized diverge. The first group underscores a diverse range of digital tools such as **Canva, Adobe Premiere, and Google Docs**, while the second group focuses more on the development of a digital application and the utilization of SPSS in needs analysis.

Identifying possible blind spots is essential for a comprehensive analysis. The diversity of participants within each focus group remains unclear, hindering a thorough understanding of varied perspectives. Additionally, **the long-term impact of the project** on participants and communities is not explicitly discussed, pointing to a potential gap in assessing sustained benefits and challenges post-project.

In conclusion, the comparative analysis underscores the multifaceted nature of the project's impact, with shared achievements and distinctive perspectives. Understanding participant diversity and exploring the project's long-term implications would further enrich the analysis, providing a more comprehensive picture of the project's successes and areas for improvement.

2.2.5. CONCLUSION

Both focus groups highlight a shared inspiration rooted in addressing societal challenges related to the digital divide. Young people express their motivation in contributing to the well-being of elderly individuals, emphasizing the tangible impact on their lives. On the other hand, youth workers articulate their commitment to fostering a collaborative and learning-oriented environment for youth. The shared motive lies in leveraging digital tools to bridge generational gaps and empower communities.

The impact of the digital on pedagogies is evident in the project's emphasis on diverse learning methodologies. Both groups underscore the practical application of skills through hands-on experiences and collaborative projects, **indicating a shift towards to non-formal education and especially experiential learning**. The incorporation of digital tools and platforms, such as Canva, Adobe Premiere, and Google Docs, reflects a dynamic and evolving pedagogical approach that aligns with contemporary digital trends.

Success in the project is attributed to the quality of the team and the active involvement and ownership of both young participants and youth workers. **The collaborative spirit, support within the team, and a shared sense of purpose contribute significantly to the project's success.** This alignment in understanding and commitment becomes a key factor, transcending the traditional metrics of success and highlighting the importance of a cohesive team.

Both focus groups **underscore the role of non-formal education in the digital youth work context.** Learning extends beyond traditional classroom settings, emphasizing experiential activities, brainstorms, and exposure to various disciplines. The project serves as a testament to the adaptability of non-formal education in navigating the complexities of digital skill development and application.

The project effectively addresses the digital needs of both young people and elderly individuals. Young participants showcase an **increased digital fluency, acquiring skills in graphic design, video editing, and data analysis**. Meanwhile, the project caters to the digital needs of the elderly by developing a user-friendly application, considering factors
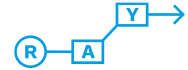
like readability and simplicity. This holistic approach bridges the digital generation gap and promotes digital inclusivity.

The project represents a current state of digital youth work that is dynamic, collaborative, and adaptive. The use of advanced digital tools and the emphasis on hands-on experiences reflect the evolving nature of digital youth work. Looking forward, the project provides insights into the potential future trajectory, highlighting the importance of sustainability, ongoing training, and adaptability to meet the evolving needs of both youth and elderly populations in the digital realm.

The interdisciplinary collaboration within the project team, incorporating diverse backgrounds such as law and psychology, enriched the project's perspectives. Challenges were encountered in digital literacy, particularly regarding the system requirements of advanced tools. The project underscored the importance of the human touch even in the digital realm, acknowledging the unique impact of physical interactions. Sustainability concerns, particularly related to long-term application viability and global collaboration challenges, surfaced as critical considerations for digital youth work initiatives. These insights contribute depth to the project's dynamics and offer valuable considerations for navigating the evolving landscape of digital youth work.

2.3.   CASE REPORT 3

2.3.1. KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PROJECT

Project description:

Key Action	Cooperation Among Organisations and Institutions
Action Type	Partnerships for Cooperation / Cooperation Partnerships in Youth
Goal(s)	to establish an international platform utilizing artificial intelligence (AI) to enhance the career paths of professionals and young people
Theme(s)	Mentorship opportunities, company network matching, and fosters personal development
Digital Activities	AI-powered CV matching and alternative career suggestions
Output	Online platform using artificial intelligence which suggests suitable jobs for young people.

2.3.2. SUMMARY PROJECT TEAMS

The focus group with the project team involved **4 project team members** *(TM1, TM2, TM3, and TM4).* They are faculty members at the coordinator organization.

2.3.2.1.   EXPLORING THE PROJECT

The project aims to address the pressing issue of youth unemployment in European Union countries and Türkiye. The comprehensive platform leverages **artificial intelligence (AI)** to enhance the career paths of both professionals and young individuals. The project emphasizes the importance of mentorship, company network matching, and personal development.

The primary motivation behind the project is the significant challenge of youth unemployment, particularly for university graduates struggling to find suitable employment. The project team recognizes the importance of proactive career planning and aims to bridge the gap between young talents and industries.

The project places a strong emphasis on the digital dimension by incorporating AI-powered tools into its core functionalities. It involves an **AI-driven CV matching system, alternative career suggestions, and e-learning components to empower** users with relevant skills and knowledge.

"We do not mean just transferring things into a computerized environment with digitalization. Digitalization has permeated every aspect of our lives. All our habits have changed. Our work processes, production processes, and learning processes have all changed. Perhaps the most crucial area affected is education.

It's not just about conducting classes via Zoom; the educational technologies and techniques we use have also changed. All our habits and methods have undergone a transformation." TM3

The project explores educational settings by integrating e-learning components, providing opportunities for young individuals to enhance their skills. It values the transformative potential of digital youth work in aligning young talents with the dynamic demands of the job market.

"The student will say: 'Review my CV and provide me with job opportunities.' The artificial intelligence will assess the CV and offer an evaluation regarding career prospects, showing suggestions related to emerging trends and future vision. The student can do this through a website or application." TM4

"In this project we are working for establishing three fundamental components in students using artificial intelligence: self-improvement, career development, and awareness in the job recruitment process. Our project offers a platform that integrates these three pillars for young individuals." TM4

Success in the project is seen as dependent on a sense of dedication, commitment, and enthusiasm among the project team. The importance of project leadership, fostering a project spirit, and creating an enjoyable collaborative environment are recognized as key factors for success.

Artificial intelligence is currently a highly active topic. Developing a tool directly based on artificial intelligence for employment is crucial. Project is creating a significant tool here that will be highly beneficial for young individuals.

In conclusion, the project demonstrates a clear understanding of the challenges it addresses, with a focus on utilizing **AI and digital tools to empower young individuals** in navigating their career paths. The emphasis on collaboration, mentorship, and proactive career planning underscores the holistic approach of the project.

2.3.2.2. EXPLORING DIGITAL YOUTH WORK

The participants of the focus group emphasized the significance of conducting studies on **non-formal education in digital environments** within the realm of digital youth work. Despite acknowledging the feasibility of implementing non-formal education methods digitally, a consensus emerged that the impact achieved through face-to-face interactions on campuses is incomparable. There is a shared understanding that while digital platforms offer extensive possibilities for non-formal education, they fall short of replicating the depth of engagement achieved in physical, interpersonal learning activities. But two of the participants mentioned that **non-formal education can definitely be carried out in digital platforms.**

"If the design of education is done effectively and robustly, the productivity can be as high as face-to-face education. Here, the crucial factor is designing both interaction and content effectively. In fact, the quality of education can be elevated to a level even surpassing face-to-face instruction when the design is done right." TM3

"Non-formal education can be easily transferred to digital platforms. Moreover, in the digital environment, more flexible and personalized activities can be conducted." TM4

Participants raised concerns about **the challenges in aligning traditional educational structures with the rapidly evolving digital needs of young people.** The need for integrating digital literacy into formal education was emphasized, and it was highlighted that the current state of digital literacy in Turkish society, particularly among institutions, is not fully prepared for the digital shift. **The hurdles faced by students, such as inadequate Internet access and device limitations, were also recognized as potential barriers hindering the fulfilment of their digital needs**.

"In Türkiye, the level of digital literacy needs to reach a certain standard. Turkish society should also be socially prepared for digitalization. Cultural codes play a significant role in the process of digitalization. I don't believe that Türkiye's institutions are fully prepared for digitalization yet. The pandemic period revealed serious challenges in this regard." TM4

The interviewees highlighted the importance of adopting innovative strategies for digital youth work, underscoring the value of experimenting with new concepts. Emphasis was placed on embracing digital culture as a fundamental aspect of youth work, acknowledging its transformative impact on both individual lives and societal dynamics. Leveraging digital platforms, especially those popular among youth, such as **TikTok and YouTube, was deemed crucial for effective engagement.** Additionally, the implementation of digital mentors, combining both human and artificial intelligence elements, emerged as a promising approach in the project. The significance of enhancing self-management skills through tailored digital education techniques was also underscored.

"I am an advocate for trying new things. There are many concepts that shape our lives, and among them, it is crucial not to overlook digital culture. Individuals born into the digital culture not only live this culture as their main source but also continuously reshape it." TM4

In conclusion, the exploration of digital youth work revealed a nuanced landscape where the potential of non-formal education in digital realms is acknowledged, yet challenges persist in bridging the gap between young people's digital needs and the realities of youth work. Successful approaches involve embracing digital culture, utilizing hybrid teaching methods, and addressing the disparities in digital literacy to create a more inclusive and effective digital youth work environment.

2.3.3. SUMMARY PARTICIPANTS

In the interview, there were only two young people who took part in some activities of the project. Because the project is still ongoing and not all the intellectual outputs are ready for young participants. So, **2 young people** *(PP1, PP2)* joined in the project. They are working as teaching assistants and also participants in the project.

2.3.3.1. EXPLORING THE PROJECT

The project is currently in the developmental phase, focusing on infrastructure and outputs. Platforms for the project, including learning, teaching and training

(LTT) activities, are still under construction. Participants are not yet actively involved due to the absence of a ready platform.

Young individuals involved in the project find **motivation in addressing uncertainties related to their future careers**. The project aims to guide and provide answers, especially for those facing challenges in finding employment or choosing a suitable career path. **The project's AI-driven approach, offering career suggestions based on individual CVs, stands out as a unique motivator** for participants.

"The biggest challenge for young individuals like myself is actually uncertainty. The question in our minds, the biggest question, is how we will find a job. This project enables us to answer these questions with artificial intelligence." PP1

"I am a doctoral student and still do not have a job. My goal is to become an academic. Sometimes, we can deviate from our goals into different areas. However, with this project, young individuals can be directed to the right places. Therefore, it is a project that touches the lives of young people. There are actually millions of young people in a situation similar to ours." PP2

The digital dimension of the project is significant, being **AI-based and geared toward enhancing the career development of students and young people.** The project's distinction lies in its personalized approach, providing career recommendations tailored to individual CVs. The use of AI applications is seen as a crucial element in addressing uncertainties surrounding job searches and career choices.

"The digital aspect of the project is based on artificial intelligence, aiming to enhance students' careers. What sets this project apart from others is its unique feature: it provides career recommendations based on your CV." PP2

The success of the project hinges on effective digital engagement, **utilizing AI to address the uncertainties and challenges young individuals face in their career paths**. The development of interactive, engaging content and the integration of digital tools like social media platforms are highlighted as essential for success. Participants emphasize the importance of mentorship and guidance in navigating the digital landscape, ensuring the responsible use of technology.

While participants generally adapt well to digital processes, challenges arise in synchronous education sessions, where internet connectivity issues may impede effective learning. Additionally, **resistance to digitalization from certain age groups**, including university professors, is noted. The lack of guidance on the use of digital tools for learning and career development is identified as a gap, especially for students navigating the digital landscape. Economic constraints, limited access to devices, and internet connectivity issues persist among certain groups of young individuals.

To address challenges, there is a **consensus on the importance of mentorship, specifically utilizing both human and AI-driven mentors.** Platforms should be designed to accommodate various learning styles, including interactive and dynamic tools like TikTok and Instagram. Consideration should be given to the socioeconomic disparities that affect digital access. Awareness programs on responsible digital citizenship and the benefits of digital literacy are recommended.

2.3.3.2.   EXPLORING DIGITAL YOUTH WORK

The participants emphasized the need **for increased support for digital youth work initiatives**, emphasizing that access to computers and the internet should not be considered a luxury but a fundamental right for every young individual. It was noted that while **some are fortunate to have these resources, millions are not**, and efforts should not only focus on providing devices and internet access but also on delivering relevant education.

Concerns and reservations about artificial intelligence were acknowledged; however, it was highlighted that understanding and embracing AI is essential. The participants expressed the **importance of increasing support for learning AI** and emphasized the need for greater participation of young people in digitalization projects. They stressed the effectiveness of non-formal education to popularize digital initiatives.

The interviewees underlined the necessity of reducing digital inequalities, considering issues such as migration, both internal and external. Regional disparities and income **inequalities were identified as barriers to achieving digital equality**. The impact of digital inequalities on vulnerable groups, such as asylum seekers and migrants, was particularly noted.

ChatGPT received positive feedback for its utility in assisting with writing and providing translations. The participants recognized the benefits of online education, citing time and economic savings. While acknowledging the advantages of face-to-face education, they also highlighted the valuable aspects of digital learning, emphasizing the need to address shortcomings rather than avoiding digital tools. The contextual advantages and disadvantages of both approaches were acknowledged.

In conclusion, the participants called for **increased support for digital youth work,** stressing the importance of addressing digital inequalities, particularly in the context of migration and regional disparities. The positive impact of AI and online education was recognized, highlighting the need for a balanced approach that considers both face-to-face and digital learning methods.

2.3.4. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The insights gathered from the two focus groups revealed both similarities and divergent perspectives, shedding light on various aspects of digital youth work.

Both focus groups emphasized the significance of **digital inclusion**, stressing that access to technology should be **a universal right rather than a privilege**. The need to bridge digital divides and provide equal opportunities for all participants, regardless of socio-economic backgrounds, was a common concern.

In both groups, there was an overall positive perception of **artificial intelligence.** While acknowledging concerns, participants expressed the importance of embracing and understanding AI for personal and professional development. The potential benefits of AI in shaping educational experiences were recognized.

Both focus groups acknowledged the advantages of **online formal or non-formal education, citing time and economic benefits.** The convenience of online activities and

learning was recognized as a valuable aspect, providing flexibility and accessibility to a broader audience.

The first group (project team members) placed a stronger emphasis on addressing **digital inequalities** in the context of migration and regional disparities. The second group, while recognizing the issue, did not delve into it extensively. This reveals a divergence in the depth of understanding regarding the multifaceted challenges of digital inclusion.

While both groups recognized the importance of AI, the first group emphasized the need for increased support and education in AI. In contrast, the second group focused more on the positive impact of AI, such as its utility in writing assistance and translations. This indicates a difference in the perceived urgency of AI education.

Both groups touched on the **positive aspects of digital youth work, but there was limited exploration of potential challenges and drawbacks**. A more in-depth analysis of obstacles and barriers could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the complexities involved.

The groups **acknowledged the advantages of online non-formal and formal education,** but there was limited discussion on the varied experiences of participants with online learning. Exploring diverse perspectives on the effectiveness of online platforms could uncover additional insights.

In summary, while the focus groups shared common ground on key issues, differences in emphasis and perspectives underscore the nuanced nature of digital youth work. Possible blind spots include the need for a more thorough exploration of challenges and a deeper understanding of individual experiences with online learning.

2.3.5. CONCLUSION

The conclusion drawn from both focus groups emphasizes a shared motivation to address youth unemployment challenges through innovative digital solutions. Both young individuals and youth workers express a strong commitment to leveraging digital youth work initiatives. The central inspiration is the pressing issue of uncertainty surrounding employment, driving a collective effort to utilize artificial intelligence and digital tools for career guidance.

The impact of the digital realm on pedagogies emerges as a key theme. The participants **recognize the transformative potential of non-formal education** in digital environments, although concerns about replicating the depth of face-to-face interactions persist. The focus on effective educational design, incorporating both content and interaction aspects, is crucial for achieving productivity comparable to traditional methods. The acknowledgement of the potential of hybrid teaching methods and the flexibility of digital platforms in delivering personalized activities underlines the dynamic landscape of digital pedagogies.

Success in digital youth work is identified as contingent on factors such as a sense of ownership, commitment, and enthusiasm among the project team. The importance of project leadership, cultivating a collaborative spirit, and creating an enjoyable work environment are highlighted as pivotal. Additionally, the success of digital youth work initiatives, like the project, is intricately tied to effective digital engagement, dynamic content development, and the integration of mentorship, **both human and AI-driven.**

The participants emphasize the potential of non-formal education in digital platforms, recognizing its adaptability and capacity for personalized activities. However, **challenges**

lie in aligning traditional educational structures with evolving digital needs. Addressing **digital literacy gaps, particularly among institutions**, is crucial. The interviewees stress the importance of integrating digital tools responsibly, considering socioeconomic disparities, and promoting awareness programs on digital citizenship and literacy.

The exploration of young people's digital life underscores the necessity of reducing digital inequalities, ensuring universal access to computers and the internet. The impact of digital inequalities on **vulnerable groups, such as asylum seekers and migrants, is acknowledged**. The participants advocate for increased support for learning AI, greater participation of young people in digitalization projects, and the popularization of digital initiatives through non-formal education.

The participants express cautious optimism regarding the future of digital youth work. While acknowledging the challenges, such as **resistance to digitalization** and socioeconomic constraints, there is an overall recognition of the benefits of online education, time savings, and economic advantages. **The importance of a balanced approach** that considers both face-to-face and digital learning methods is emphasized for a comprehensive and inclusive future of digital youth work.

In summary, the convergence of motivations, the impact on pedagogies, key success factors, the role of non-formal education, understanding young people's digital life, and the future outlook collectively shape the comprehensive landscape of digital youth work as illuminated by the insights from both focus groups. The incorporation of both artificial intelligence and human mentorship in the project showcases a promising hybrid model, capitalizing on AI's analytical strengths and human mentors' nuanced guidance. Discussions surrounding hybrid learning environments highlight the importance of balancing traditional and digital teaching methods for enhanced educational outcomes. Recognition of digital inequalities emphasizes the necessity of broader societal preparedness, addressing cultural codes, regional disparities, and migration-related challenges. The emphasis on responsible digital citizenship underscores an awareness of the ethical dimensions of digital engagement. The need for continuous adaptation to evolving digital realities and the active involvement of young contributors, even in project developmental phases, further emphasizes the dynamic and interconnected nature of digital youth work. Overall, these insights contribute to a comprehensive understanding, advocating for ethical, inclusive, and adaptable approaches in the digital realm to empower young individuals effectively.

2.4. CASE REPORT 4

2.4.1. KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PROJECT

Project description:

Key Action	Cooperation Among Organisations and Institutions
Action Type	Partnerships for Cooperation / Cooperation Partnerships in Youth
Goal(s)	to guide young people to entrepreneurship and to inform them about the supports they can receive and to enable young trades-men to open up to the world thanks to the e-commerce platform created
Theme(s)	Digital Entrepreneurship and E-Commerce
Digital Activities	Project website, e-commerce platform observing European good practices, online training activities, short film shooting
Output	E-commerce platform, short films

2.4.2. SUMMARY PROJECT TEAMS

The focus group with the project team involved **2 key team members** *(TM1, TM2)* of project team. They are both actively working in the project team and they are also youth workers.

2.4.2.1. EXPLORING THE PROJECT

The project focuses on digitalization in various aspects, recognizing its increasing prevalence in daily life and work. **Earlier experiences with digital projects** have laid the groundwork for the current project, emphasizing digital transformation. Project is supporting young entrepreneurship, to direct tradesman to e-commerce, to increase the employability of youth and to improve their professional skills.

"We were already aware of digitalization before. We have previously completed two Erasmus+ projects, both of which involved digitalization. Now, we are continuing with another project that includes digitalization. In fact, this project can be considered as a continuation and practical implementation of the projects we have previously conducted." TM1

The team's motivation stems from a desire **to learn from partners and to apply and share their own experiences.** Digitalization is not new to them, as they have previously engaged in similar projects. This ongoing project is seen as a continuation and practical application of their past experiences.

The project has been significantly influenced by the **pandemic**, which accelerated the shift towards digitalization. This includes transitioning to online training, creating short films, and developing a website. The project also involves a digital

entrepreneurship competition, emphasizing the importance of digital platforms for success.

"The main factor that drove us towards digitalization was the pandemic. Once we saw the benefits of digitalization during the pandemic, we wanted to continue in this direction. We decided to conduct many of our trainings online. We were already offering some trainings, so we thought, why not make them into short films? Therefore, we decided to produce short films for this project. Additionally, we created a website for our project. Thus, our association is making progress in the process of digitalization." TM2

The project integrates digital tools into educational settings, enhancing accessibility and engagement. The focus is on **leveraging digital platforms** for more effective communication and learning. The use of e-signatures and a reduction in paper usage reflects a shift towards digital efficiency.

"Digitalization is now everywhere in our lives. The use of paper for documents has almost dropped to zero. We even use electronic signatures in our work." TM2

Success factors include adapting to **digital trends, engaging effectively on social media**, and addressing the challenges of digital literacy and content creation. The digital aspect has enabled **wider participation and innovation** in the project's activities.

"As part of the project, an entrepreneurship competition was organized. It was a completely digital competition. Everyone expressed their ideas through video recordings on their cell phones and submitted them. We conducted our competition in a very simple manner using digital means. The slogan 'Capture your idea and send it' was used. Thus, we held a digital competition. Additionally, we produced short films and published them." TM2

These statements highlight how the project focuses on digitalization and emphasizes the impact of digital tools on young people's entrepreneurship, employability, and professional development. The digital transformation process, accelerated by the pandemic, plays a significant role in the success of the project.

2.4.2.2. EXPLORING DIGITAL YOUTH WORK

The transition to digital platforms may create challenges in maintaining the essence of **non-formal education, which often relies on direct interaction and experiential learning**. Finding a balance between digital and traditional methods is crucial.

There is a recognized **gap between the digital capabilities of the youth** and the offerings of youth work. Young people's high digital literacy and the need for digital content that is relevant, engaging, and clear are highlighted. Addressing digital bullying and content creation challenges are also essential.

"Young people have a great need for clear information. There is a lot of information pollution. At the same time, virtual peer bullying can occur in digital environments. We can call this digital bullying. This can be considered a challenge for us." TM1

The project demonstrates successful digital youth work by incorporating digital tools in educational activities, creating digital competitions, and using short films for engagement. Emphasizing the need for social media presence and the use of
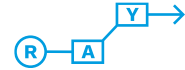
digital tools like **Canva, Microsoft Office programs, and Google Drive** reflects an understanding of the digital landscape. Balancing digital and physical interactions is seen as key to engaging youth effectively.

"Besides, we use the Canva program. None of us are graphic designers, but we can create very nice and easy designs with Canva. There are other similar programs, including those for designing videos. Additionally, I highly recommend the use of online notebooks for taking notes. This not only saves paper, thus being environmentally friendly, but also prevents paper waste. For scheduling and planning, tools like Microsoft Outlook's planners are very useful. I believe these can be beneficial both for project management and for organizing one's personal life." TM1

The project leader finds the project generally successful, not just because of personal involvement, but because it **addresses a real need in Türkiye**. Despite not having completed all activities yet, the project has shown success in the project partner countries where e-commerce was notably underdeveloped. The project has inspired and educated young people in these countries about e-commerce. This initiative has facilitated not only local inspiration but also international cooperation leading to practical business engagements. The project has also been a platform for sharing best practices, as seen in the transfer of Turkish e-commerce models to these countries. Overall, the project is considered successful, though some bureaucratic hurdles and system issues need resolution.

2.4.3. SUMMARY PARTICIPANTS

There were **4 project participants** *(PP1, PP2, PP3, and PP4)* in the focus group discussion. All of them at the same time youth workers.

2.4.3.1. EXPLORING THE PROJECT

The participants highlighted the importance of the project in fostering university-industry collaboration, specifically emphasizing the role of the intermediary institution in bridging this gap. Motivations included enhancing university capacities, empowering students, and **creating awareness about the significance of digital entrepreneurship and e-commerce.**

"In the pandemic, our habits have changed. Instead of going out to buy things, people now prefer placing online orders. E-commerce sales are quite low in my country. The government's systems are not yet ready. Sales through Instagram and Facebook exist, but we are weak in terms of e-commerce websites. Our country is particularly dependent on trade, making this a crucial area." PP3

Motivations for project involvement included the crucial role of ecosystems, the potential for university-industry collaboration, and **the need for developing digital skills in students.** The participants noted the project's potential to serve as a bridge between academia and industry, emphasizing the importance of capacity building and student benefit.

The digital dimension of the project was seen as pivotal, especially in the context of the **changing business landscape due to technology**. The emphasis on digital entrepreneurship, e-commerce, and the transformative impact of digitalization on

business models was evident. Participants discussed the challenges and opportunities related to digitalization in their own countries and the need for more collaborations.

"One of the needs of our era is entrepreneurship and e-commerce. Social entrepreneurship is also important. Many young people engage in e-commerce, and through this project, we can develop ourselves in this area." PP2

Success factors were identified, including the **project's focus on digitalization, its potential to extend beyond Türkiye and impact different countries**, and the networking opportunities it provides. While certain activities like LTT and workshops had not yet occurred, the overall success of the project was tied to its ability to address digitalization and create a network.

2.4.3.2.   EXPLORING DIGITAL YOUTH WORK

The participants emphasized the impact of the pandemic on changing habits, with a notable shift towards online activities. They discussed the challenges faced in a partner country in the project regarding e-commerce readiness and highlighted the importance of enhancing **digital literacy** to cope with the evolving digital landscape.
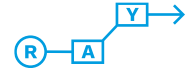
"Entrepreneurship and digitalization are a double-edged sword. On one hand, digitalization is a highly facilitating factor. Especially during significant crises like the pandemic, it has been instrumental in ensuring the continuation of socialization and the right to education, particularly for the youth. On the other hand, we are aware of Türkiye's limitations in various aspects, especially considering the devices used by the youth. Academically, there may be complaints from academics. Students can complete their assignments using answers obtained from artificial intelligence." PP2

Digitalization was identified as a **double-edged sword**, offering facilitation during crises like the pandemic but revealing disparities in digital access. Participants expressed the necessity of addressing the socio-economic gap and ensuring that young people are equipped with digital skills, especially considering the digital divide.

"Non-formal learning-education and digitalization can be synchronized. However, I believe this is a matter that needs to be considered on a project-specific basis, considering the applied location and country. Not every non-formal learning method can be digitized; infrastructure is crucial for this. There might be countries with infrastructure unsuitable for this purpose, and, conversely, countries with excellent infrastructure. Digital literacy also plays a separate role in this synchronization process." PP1

Concerns were raised about the potential conflicts in synchronizing non-formal education with digital platforms, emphasizing **the need for infrastructure and digital literacy**. The participants acknowledged that a balanced approach, considering both digital literacy and appropriate infrastructure, is crucial to avoid exacerbating inequalities.

"In non-formal education, interactivity and engagement are crucial. This is feasible if the target audience for education is adequately motivated. However, with an unmotivated or uncertain audience, this situation becomes impractical. In other words, the motivation of participants is highly important. This motivation

and awareness of what the education will yield should be present. It is essential to concretize everything that the education will add. Motivating an individual with something abstract is challenging. Therefore, this process needs to be valued." PP2

The importance of workshops, particularly those focusing on **coding and digital literacy**, was highlighted. Social media and online sales training garnered significant interest among the youth. It was suggested that support for digitalization in businesses should be increased, emphasizing the positive role of digitalization in education and entrepreneurship.

"Digitalization facilitates learning and education, reducing opportunity inequality. Not everyone may be able to attend face-to-face education, but they can participate digitally. For example, if I want to improve myself in a specific field, I don't necessarily have to go to a school or course; I can easily enrol in relevant online courses over the internet. This is a tremendous resource for me." PP2

"There are people who are not reached by Erasmus+ projects. For instance, even if digital projects were to be implemented, Erasmus+ cannot reach and include certain segments of the population due to the lack of necessary infrastructure or literacy." PP1

These findings underscore the need for strategic planning, capacity building, and a balanced approach to digitalization in both the project's context and broader youth work initiatives.

2.4.4. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Both the project team and participants emphasize the critical role of digitalization in the project. They highlight its integration into various aspects such as education**, entrepreneurship, and e-commerce**, which is a common thread in both discussions.

The pandemic's role as a catalyst for digital transformation is a unanimous point. Both groups acknowledge the shift towards **online platforms and digital tools as a response to the challenges posed by the pandemic**.

Both focus groups recognize the importance of enhancing digital literacy and skills among youth. This includes the utilization of tools like Canva, Microsoft Office, and online notebooks, underscoring the need for digital competency in modern education and business practices.

Each group mentions the challenges that come with the transition to digital platforms, such as the necessity **of balancing digital and non-formal education and the disparities** in digital access and infrastructure.

The project team seems more confident about the project's success and its impact, especially in promoting digital entrepreneurship. In contrast, the participants are more cautious and highlight the existing limitations and challenges in digital infrastructure and literacy, particularly in partner countries of the project.

The project team focuses on the innovative **methods of digital non-formal education, like short films and online competitions**. However, the participants stress the importance of **motivation and engagement in non-formal education**, which can be challenging to replicate in digital formats.

While both groups acknowledge the challenges of digitalization, the participants are more vocal about the **socio-economic disparities and the digital divide**. They emphasize the need for inclusivity and accessibility in digital education and entrepreneurship initiatives.

There seems to be less focus on how digital skills acquired through the project are applied in real-world scenarios and their long-term impact on the participants' professional and personal development. Both groups discuss the project's methods and objectives, but there is limited mention of direct feedback or evaluation from the youth who are the target audience of these digital initiatives.

In conclusion, while both groups are aligned **on the importance and potential of digitalization in youth work and education, their perspectives diverge on the execution, challenges, and evaluation of these digital initiatives.** Identifying and addressing these blind spots is crucial for the project's long-term success and sustainability.

2.4.5. CONCLUSION

The inspiration and motives driving both young people and youth workers towards digital youth work are multifaceted. For young people, the allure of digital youth work lies in its relevance to their digital-centric lifestyle, offering them **skills and knowledge that are directly applicable in today's technology-driven world.** Youth workers, on the other hand, are motivated by **the potential of digital platforms to innovate and enhance traditional educational methods,** reaching a wider audience more effectively. This blend of necessity and innovation is a powerful catalyst, driving the adoption of digital tools in youth work.

The **pandemic** has played a significant role in accelerating this shift, demonstrating the necessity and effectiveness of digital platforms in maintaining continuity in education and engagement. It has highlighted digital literacy not just as a skill but as a critical component of modern learning and professional development.

Digitalization has significantly impacted pedagogical approaches, necessitated a rethink of traditional teaching and learning methods. The integration of digital tools has opened new avenues for engagement, interaction, and accessibility, making learning more flexible and inclusive. The success of these digital pedagogies, however, hinges on several factors. Firstly, the content must be relevant and engaging, tailored to the interests and needs of the youth. Secondly, there needs to be a balance between digital and non-formal education methods, ensuring that the **non-formal, experiential and interpersonal aspects of learning are not lost in the digital translation.**

Moreover, the success of digital youth work is contingent upon addressing the **digital divide.** Ensuring equitable access to digital tools and Internet connectivity is vital for inclusive education and participation.

The challenge lies in harmoniously blending non-formal education methods with digital platforms. This involves maintaining the essence of non-formal education - interactivity, personal engagement, and experiential learning - while leveraging the vast potential of digital tools. The digital life of young people today is rich and varied, encompassing not only social media and entertainment but also avenues for learning, self-expression, and community building. Youth work practices need to tap into these aspects, ensuring that digital initiatives are not only educational but also resonate with the interests and daily digital experiences of young people.
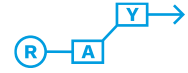
Looking ahead**, the future of digital youth work seems promising but requires strategic planning and adaptation.** It must continually evolve to keep pace with technological advancements and changing youth interests. Additionally, it's imperative to focus on building digital resilience among young people, equipping them to navigate the challenges of the digital world, such as misinformation and cyberbullying.

In summary, digital youth work stands at a crossroads of opportunity and challenge. Embracing digital tools while staying true to the principles of non-formal education, addressing the digital divide, and focusing on digital literacy and resilience are key to shaping a future where digital youth work is an integral and effective component of youth development.

While the current discussions and strategies are robust, there's a continuous need for adaptability and innovation in response to the rapid technological changes and the shifting digital landscape. The perspectives of both youth and youth workers indicate a growing awareness of the importance of digital resilience and ethics in the digital realm. This awareness, while not explicitly outlined in the reporting template, is crucial for future-proofing digital youth work. It suggests a growing need to integrate topics like digital rights, online safety, and ethical use of technology into youth work practices, ensuring that young people are not only digitally adept but also digitally wise.

3. ANALYTIC SUMMARY

3.1.1. GRASPING SUCCESFUL APPROACHES TO DIGITAL YOUTH WORK IN TÜRKİYE

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the crucial role of digital education in Türkiye's digital transformation. In Türkiye, effective approaches to digital youth work primarily derive from projects tailored to the actual needs of young people. Common among the studied case studies is a focus on addressing genuine needs. This includes areas such as employment, education, entrepreneurship, mentoring, trading and learning, all within a digital context. Notably, the use of artificial intelligence in these projects has contributed to their success. Many projects also emphasize the importance of digital literacy. When young people are actively involved in decision-making, the projects gain more success and motivation. For instance, one project involved youth creating a digital solution to assist the elderly, which was particularly meaningful and engaging for them. Also, in other projects young people and youth workers address their needs. Their activities are mostly in digital platforms. These activities often incorporate non-formal learning methods, offering scope for further development.

3.1.2. BRIDGING THE GAP

Leveraging the potential of digital technologies for teaching and learning, and the growing need for digital skills development for everyone, has been highlighted. The pandemic has pushed youth organizations towards online and digital tools, impacting the mobility of young people. Although there has been an increase in digital youth work in policies and practices, it still hasn't reached its full potential in youth work considering the rising importance of digitalization in young people's lives. Therefore, effectively integrating digitalization in youth work is crucial for enhancing post-pandemic participation of young people, making youth work more effective.

The pandemic has heightened the significance of digitalization in youth work. Young people and youth workers face challenges in digital learning, such as access to technology, Internet availability, and economic constraints. The digital capacities of youth organizations have not yet reached the desired level, with rural areas facing more pronounced issues, leading to digital inequalities. Consequently, the importance and effective use of digitalization in youth participation has become more crucial than ever.

3.1.3. NAVIGATING NON-FORMALITY WITHIN DIGITAL ENVIRONMENTS

In all discussions, both participants and project teams emphasized the feasibility of transferring non-formal learning and education methods to digital platforms. The key is to enhance engagement potential and impact. It's crucial to understand the motivations of participants, trainers, and facilitators, along with planning and the value of training. Moreover, digital technologies for non-formal education are evolving, with the use of artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and augmented reality promising to add a new dimension to digital youth work. This evolution could make non-formal education more effective than current physical methods in many cases, leading to economic and time savings. It also
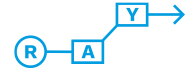
could strengthen the participation of youth with limited resources in non-formal education. To effectively enhance and implement digital non-formal learning, it's essential to bolster digital literacy among young people.

3.1.4. ENVISIONING DIGITAL YOUTH WORK

To effectively integrate digitalization into youth work and education, it's essential to develop digital literacy from primary school levels, including understanding algorithms and coding. Training and projects for youth workers are vital to enhance their digital competencies. Youth workers should be equipped with skills to create and implement digital non-formal learning content. Also, NGOs and public institutions in the youth sector must strengthen their digital capacities. Following are some needs arising from the focus group discussions.

- Creating opportunities for proactive use of digital media and technology in youth work is crucial. For this reason, there should be equality to reach the digital opportunities.
- Ensuring access to technologies for effective digitalization and promoting inclusivity is vital. Digital participation should be recognized, and more projects should be implemented in this regard.
- Digital youth work should be supported by the same ethics, values, and principles as traditional youth work. Digital security should be considered.
- Enhancing information and data literacy among young people and workers and supporting projects that raise awareness about digital communication and security are important.
- Maximizing the benefits of digitalization to meet the needs of youth and youth workers, providing digital support to them, and encouraging the use of Virtual Reality (VR) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) in youth work can enhance participation, learning experiences, and the effectiveness of youth work.

3.1.5. CONCLUSION

Youth and digitalization are key aspects of youth work, with Türkiye's potential in this area being significant. The country is developing its New Digital State Strategy[1], considering priorities and international trends. The strategy focuses on strategic alignment and governance, digital skills, public data management, technological infrastructure, service design and delivery, and digital inclusivity and participation.

Various approaches to digitalization, such as e-commerce, developing mobile applications, digital entrepreneurship, artificial intelligence, and e-gaming, have emerged in the case studies in this report. These areas are crucial for digitalization and align with Türkiye's strategies under the Erasmus+ projects.

Effective and healthy digitalization processes will significantly impact youths' learning and participation. Youth workers and young people should still strengthen digital learning and participation in the youth sector, leading to effective digitalization and learning opportunities. However, challenges like digital literacy, economic access to digital devices, digital security, and infrastructural limitations need addressing.

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[1] For more details about strategy the please visit the website of the Digital Transformation Office of the Presidency of Republic of Türkiye: https://cbddo.gov.tr/en/