

InDigital: Inclusive digital competence training for labour market risk groups

National Report – BULGARIA



INDIGITAL

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1. INTRODUCTION

The general idea of the InDigital project is to improve training opportunities for adults without digital skills, the unemployed and young people who are outside education or employment, by providing innovative and flexible training in basic digital competences. The objective of the project is aimed to develop flexible and targeted VET programs, which will contribute to overcome the existing gaps in access to education for adults to successfully find employment.



The partner organizations will join forces to develop inclusive training in basic digital competencies, incorporating digital and flexible learning methods that will be integrated into the work of both organizations and used effectively in the future. All products will be freely shared with partners and training organizations, in a way to be used in supporting people with few opportunities and risk groups.

The InDigital consortium has designed a survey, that address the target groups (adults without digital skills, young people outside education or employment) and trainers/mentors/experts, working with them in Bulgaria and Cypress, with the option of an English version to address potential other participants across Europe, including migrants and refugees.

The survey was launched in November 2022 and is still open. Therefore, the results that are presented in the report are referred to the period November 2022 -January 2023.

The participation to the survey was different in the countries object of the analysis. Most of the participants form the target group have participated in their own language, therefore, the language is a proxy of the headquarters country. Regarding the English version, the participants have indicated the location – Bulgaria, Cypress or other.

The survey includes two types of questionnaires, as the first one is for adults without or with low digital skills, unemployed and young people, who are not in education, training, or employment (NEETS) and the second one is designed for trainers, mentors and experts who works with that kind of trainees.

2. DIGITAL SKILLS TO VET EDUCATION

Nowadays, after the pandemic period, digital skills are becoming increasingly important. In the EU, however, in the recent years it was observed a limited progress towards improving of the basic digital competences of European adult citizens.

According to the 2021 Report No. 2 on EU Actions to tackle low digital skills of European Court of Auditors, in 2019 over 75 million elderly European citizens did not have even basic digital skills. This is especially pronounced in older people, people with a low educational level and the unemployed. At the same time, over 90% of jobs now require at least basic digital skills. The Report states that adults with higher digital skills find work more easily and are paid more pay than people with lower skills.

The "digital gap" between adults with and without basic digital skills varies widely between the different member states. According to the indicators used by the Commission, the level of basic digital skills in the Member States has not improved significantly in recent years.

For the period 2021-2027, the Commission has for the first time set a specific target for increasing the percentage of citizens with basic digital skills from 56% in 2019 to 70% in 2025.

According to the data presented in the Report, according to the study of DESI Human Capital Dimension 2019 – Basic and advanced skills, Bulgaria, and Cyprus rank among the last in terms of digital skills.

In the beginning of 2023, the Bulgarian government shall start implementing special measures under the National Recovery and Resilience Plan aiming that include design of trainings aiming at improving the basic digital competences.

Based on a need analysis on emerging skill profiles this project aims to support VET organizations in:

- improving training opportunities for adults without digital skills, the unemployed and young people outside education or employment, by providing innovative and flexible training in basic digital competences.
- developing flexible and targeted VET programs, which contribute to overcoming the existing gaps in access to education for adults of working age to successfully find employment.



3. GOOD PRACTICES

Aiming at the improvement of the digital competences for the specific target group and the trainers, in Bulgaria were observed good practices which are presented below.

GOOD PRACTICE 1	
Name	Development of new models for digital skills in response to the future labour market's challenges
Description	<p>The good practice is based on a comprehensive concept to support the workforce, aimed at overcoming imbalances in the field of digital knowledge and skills, meeting the needs of the labour market in a competitive and developing economy in terms of its technological development. The activities for realization of the project objectives envisage as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - conducting an analysis of the needs for digital skills by economic sectors. - development of unified profiles for digital skills by key professions. - assessment of digital competencies, by testing the current skills of the workforce by economic sectors, through developed tools. - development of informal training programs for the development of specific digital skills, according to a specific profession. - pilot testing of the learning content. - development and adoption of sectoral qualification frameworks for development of digital skills. - development of methodological guidelines for maintaining and upgrading digital skills of workers in the sectors, for providing continuing education for better professional

	<p>realization and increasing the professional training of employees.</p> <p>- conducting an information campaign to raise awareness.</p>
Key Stakeholders/ Provider	Confederation of Employers and Industrialists in Bulgaria
Level (Organizational, Regional, Local, National)	National level
Type (Digital Skills, Professional Skills etc.)	Digital skills
Tools/Resources/ Services	<p>Informal training programs</p> <p>Sectoral qualification frameworks</p>
Link/ Website	http://www.krib.bg/en

GOOD PRACTICE 2	
Name	TOGETHER - Social innovations for integration of young people into the labour market
Description	<p>The project aims to promote transnational partnerships between Bulgaria and Belgium through transfer and implementation of social innovation and exchange of good practices for sustainable integration of young people (up to 29 years) on the labour market.</p> <p>The target group includes 40 economically inactive young people who are not in education or training, at the age of 15 to 29.</p> <p>Project activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Preparation of specific analyses of the experience of Belgium in terms of planning and implementation of policies in the field of integration of young people up to 29 years on the labour market - Enhancing the capacity of partners and stakeholders to develop, implement, monitor, and evaluate good practice and social innovations.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adapting and validating social innovations in Bulgaria based on innovative models – educational platform. - Providing support and motivation of 40 persons of the target group. - Providing complex of training and skills for sustainable integration. - Assessment of results, achieved in terms of applicability of its innovative elements. - Dissemination of results.
Key Stakeholders/ Provider	Association for Social Innovation and
Level (Organisational, Regional, Local, National)	National level
Type (Digital Skills, Professional Skills etc.)	<p>Educational platform</p> <p>Digital competence training materials</p> <p>Professional skills training materials</p>
Tools/Resources/ Services	Online trainings/online materials
Link/ Website	http://inspiremebg.org/

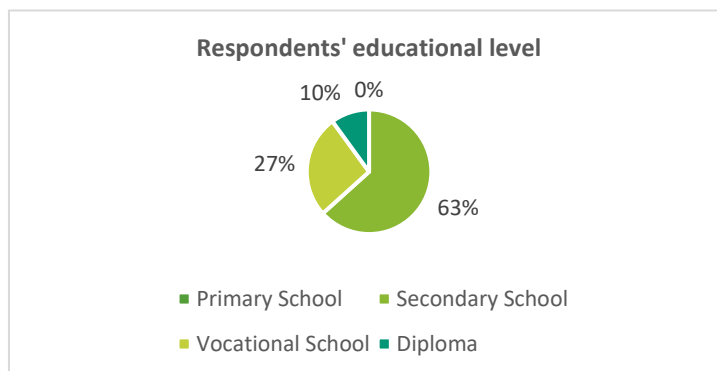
4. QUESTIONNAIRE TO ADULT LEARNERS (TARGET GROUP)

The questionnaires for adult learners are distributed on the territory of Stolichna municipality, Sevlievo municipality, Tryavna municipality, Dryanovo municipality and Ihtiman municipality up to 70 people (age 18-65 years), who represent members of the target group - unemployed, youth out of education or training, migrants. The questionnaire for adult Learners is designed in three sections: the first one is informative, the second one consists of question for self-assessment of basic digital competences and the last one represents a diagnostic test of the same topics as the second section.

Section 1 – Respondents’ information.

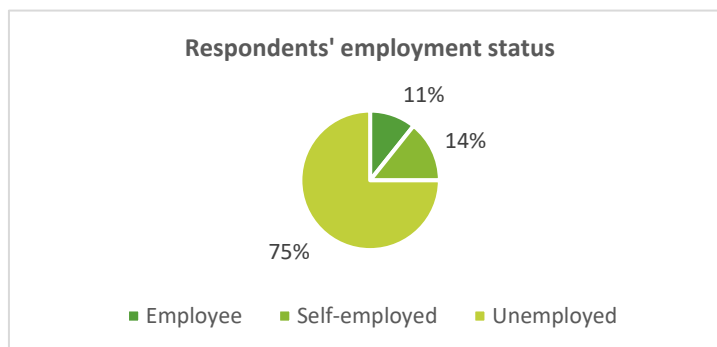
The Survey’s respondents have completed secondary education (63%), vocational education (27%), and 10% of them have high school diploma (fig. 1).

Figure 1: Respondents’ educational level



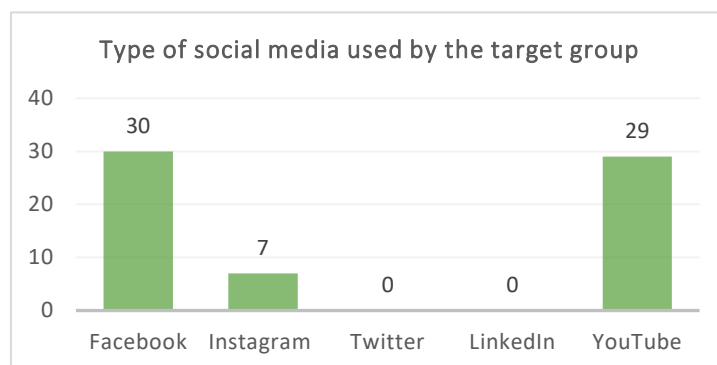
Concerning the activity status, most of respondents in the survey are unemployed (75%), 14% are self-employed, and 11% are employed (fig. 2).

Figure 2: Respondents’ employment status



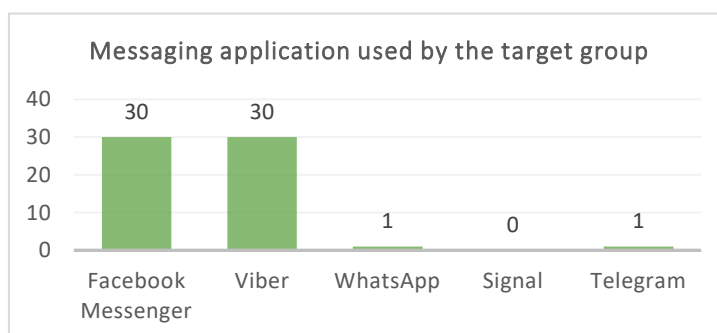
All interviewed participants are using Facebook and YouTube, none of them is using the platforms Twitter nor LinkedIn (fig. 3).

Figure 3: Type of social media, used by the target group.



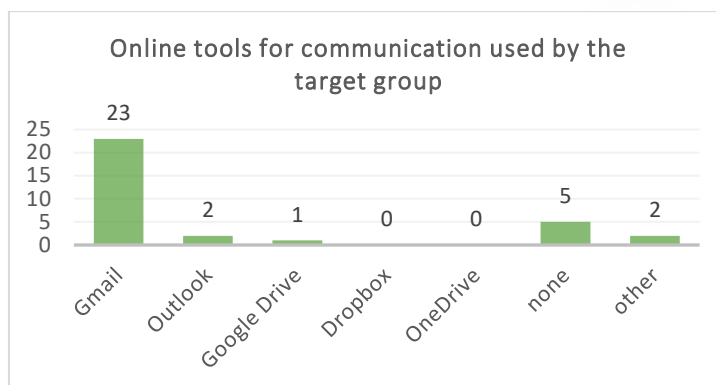
The most popular messaging applications, used by the respondents include Facebook (all respondents are using it), also Viber, and one is using WhatsApp and Telegram (fig. 4).

Figure 4: Messaging applications used by the target group



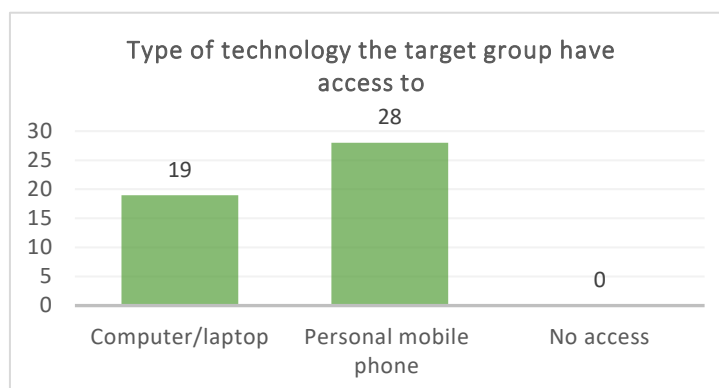
Applications for online communication also don't differ from the most popular used – 23 of the participants are using Gmail, only 2 are using Outlook, 1 – Google Drive, 5 – none (fig. 5).

Figure 5: Online tools for communication used by the target group.



The last question in the section refers to the type of technology the target group have an access – 28 of them are using personal mobile phone, 19 – computer of laptop (fig. 6).

Figure 6: Type of technology the target group have access to



Section 2 - Self-assessment of knowledge related to the basic digital competences.

This section encompasses five main areas in basic digital competences.

The first area is related to the knowledge in *Information and Data Literacy*.

Five questions were formulated in the questionnaire, about the basic knowledge in this area of the potential trainees from the target group. As nowadays Internet is a must, 90% of the respondents say that they surely know how to access Internet, and only 10% may need help/additional information.

Regarding the use of search engines to find information and make use of search terms to generate better results, more of the respondents are neutral (40%) or rather/fully disagree that they have sufficient knowledge (23%). Only 37% of the target group confirm that are confident in this type of action.

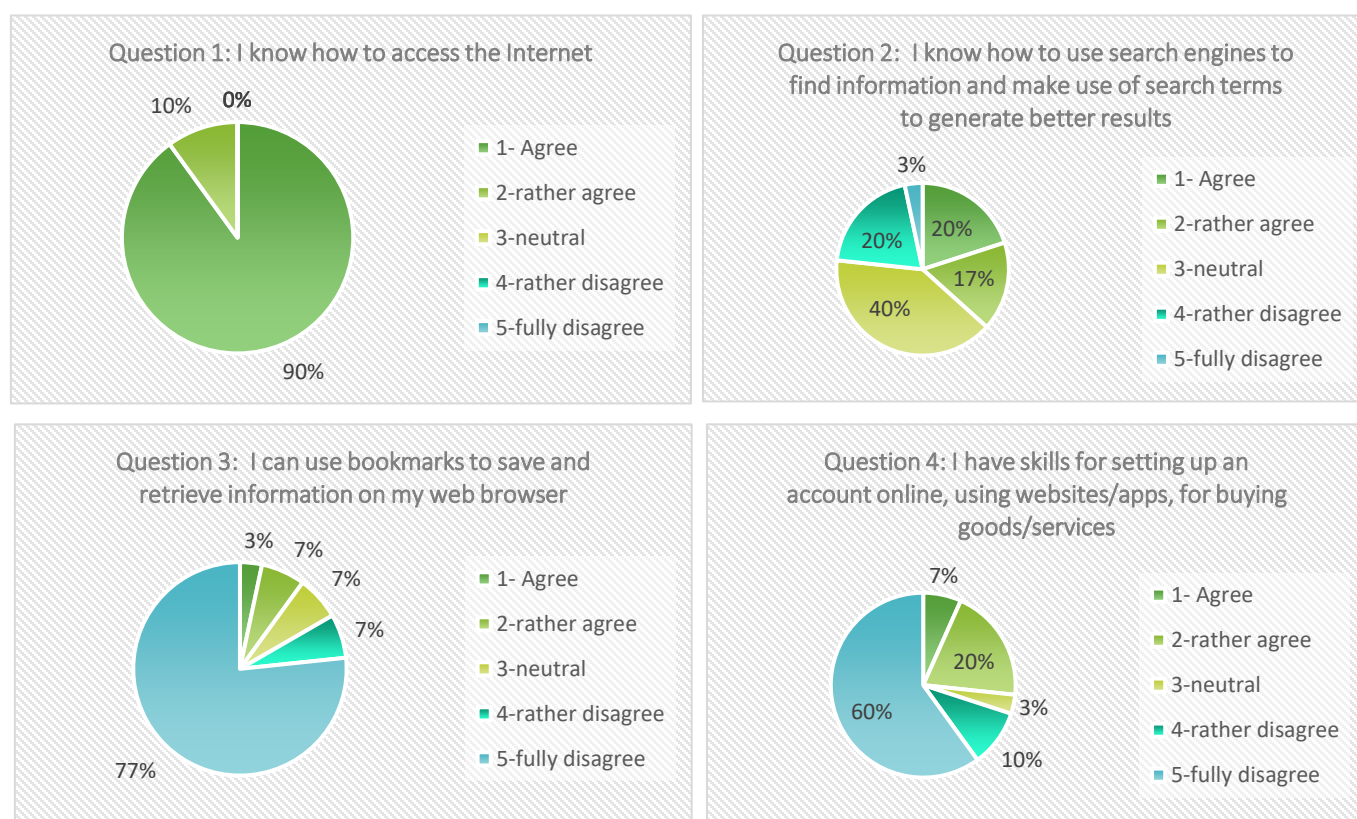
When using bookmarks in Internet, most of the respondents are sharing that are not having the knowledge (90% from neutral to fully disagree).

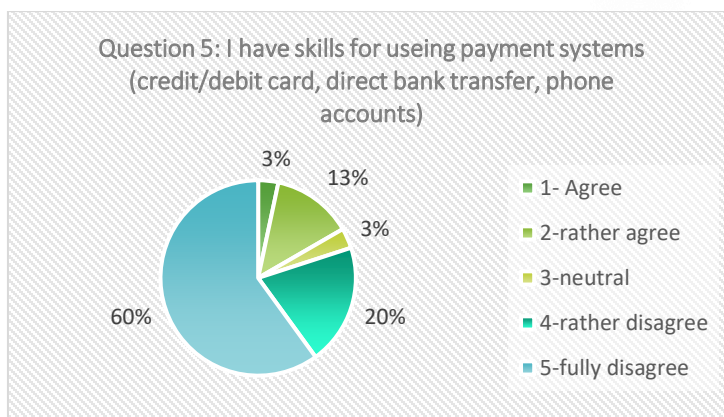
Setting up an account for using appropriate websites/apps for shopping online is difficult for 73% of the target group, and only 27% agree or rather agree that they are confident.

The majority of survey participants indicate that they do not have the necessary skills to navigate payment systems and payment methods on the Internet (83% are neutral/rather or fully disagree with the statement).

All analysed responses are visualized in a figure 7.

Figure 7: Self-assessment in Information and Data Literacy





The second area of knowledge is related to the knowledge in *Digital Content Creation*.

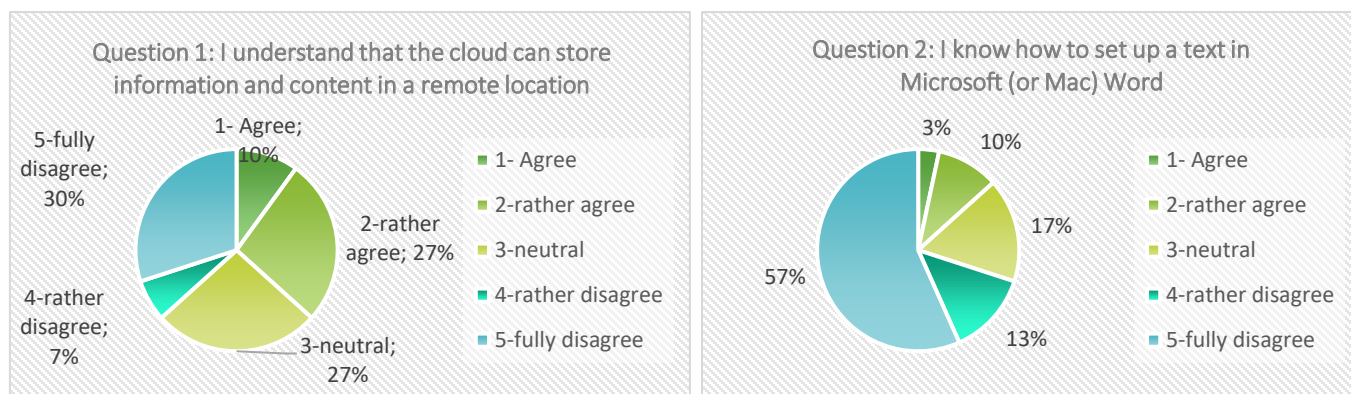
Creating digital content is also part of the basic skills self-assessment included in the survey. Regarding accessing cloud services and storing information online, 37% of the participants are aware of the possibilities, and 63% of them are not convinced of their knowledge or do not have any.

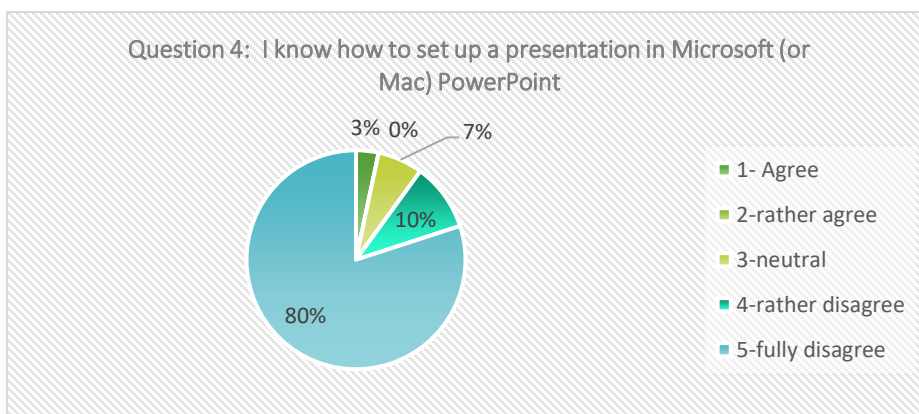
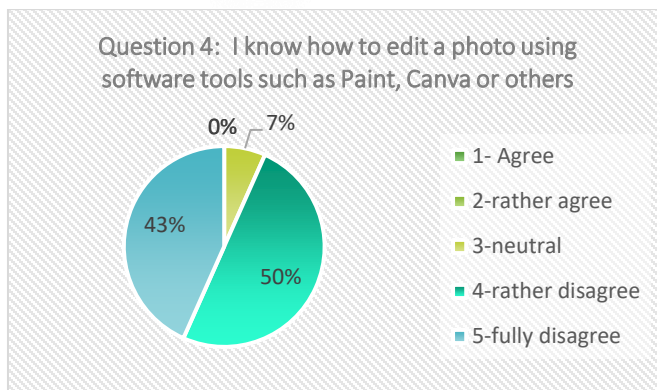
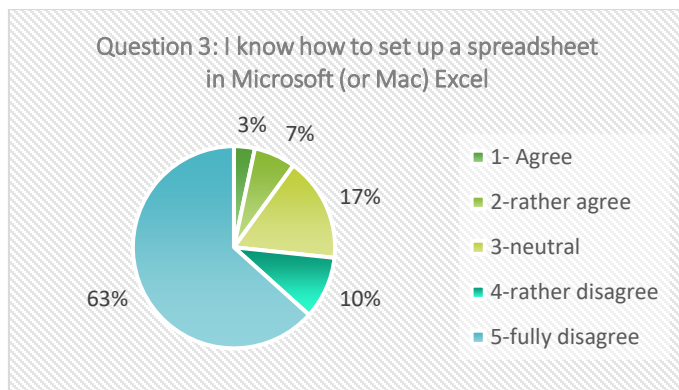
When using word processing programs, only a small part of the participants in the questionnaire indicated that they felt confident (13%), while 87% considered that they did not have the desired knowledge and skills. When using spreadsheets, the participants rate their skills as good (10%) and as insufficient - 90%.

The knowledge and skills of the respondents regarding working with presentation programs are the most insufficient, as only 3% of the survey participants are confident in working with PowerPoint, and none is familiar with the capabilities of processing photos programs – Paint/Canva or others.

All analyzed responses are visualized in a figure 8.

Figure 8: Self-assessment in Digital Content Creation





The third one is related to the knowledge in *Communication and Collaboration*.

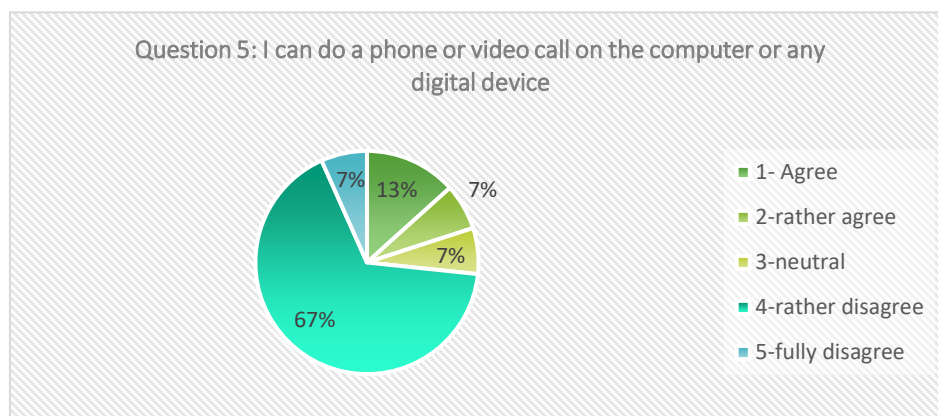
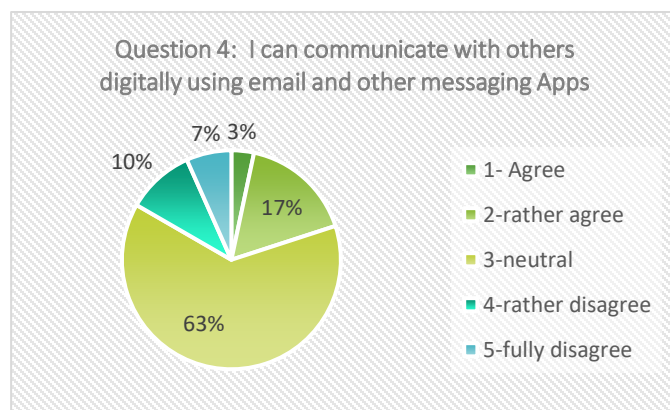
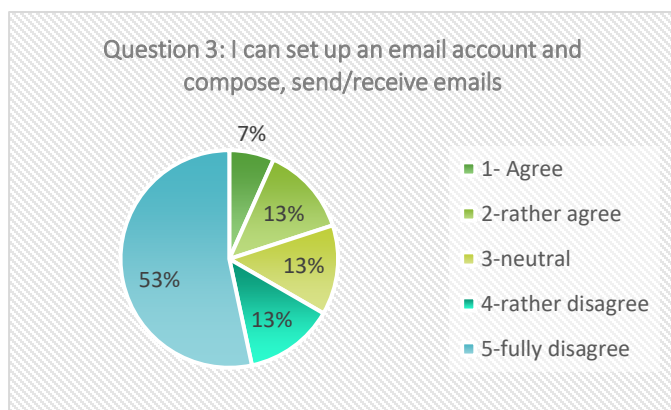
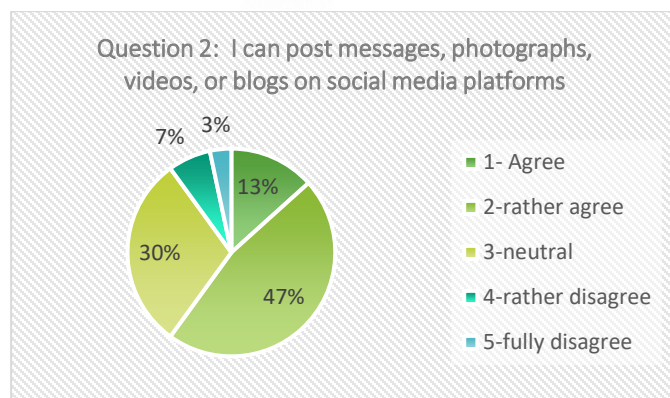
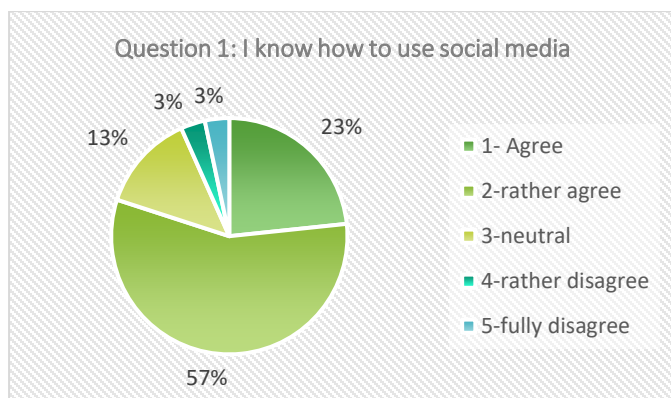
The formulated questions aim to explore the communication skills and opportunities to interact in an electronic environment, which are of critical importance today.

Regarding the penetration of social media, 80% of the target group reports that they have sufficient knowledge and communication skills. The skills for collaboration and publishing different types of information on social platforms were assessed as sufficient by 60% of the participants.

Regarding the types of communication - working with e-mail, only 20% are confident in their skills for creating an account and effective communication with e-mail in the Internet space. An equal number of respondents (20%) say they are confident in their ability to initiate and conduct video communication online.

All analyzed responses are visualized in a figure 9.

Figure 9: Self-assessment in Communication and Collaboration



The fourth one is related to the knowledge in *Safety in Internet*.

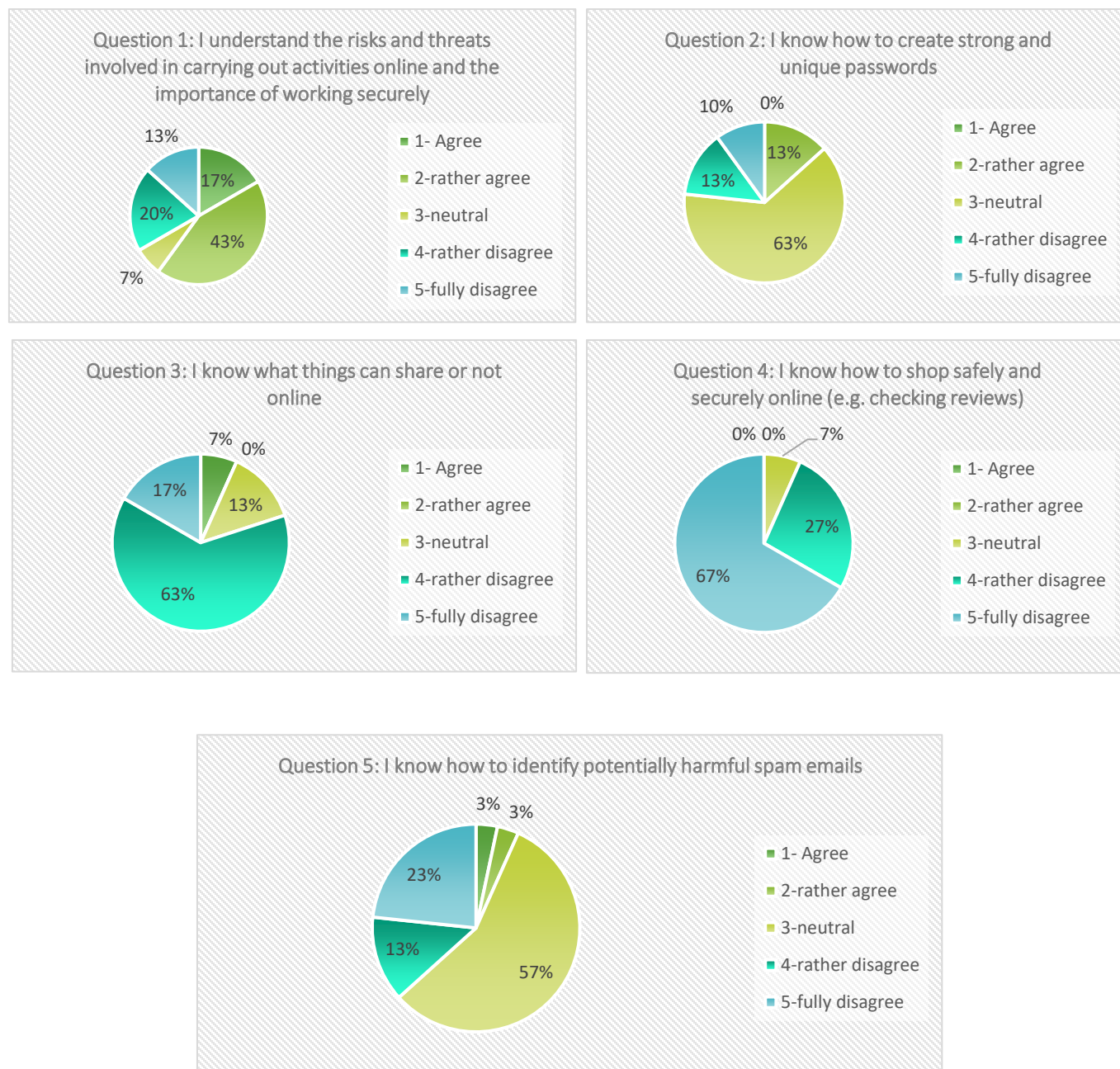
Internet risk assessment is of utmost importance to everyone who accesses and conducts information on the Internet.

Participants highly value the need for security on the Internet (60%), and 40% are neutral or consider security to be of little importance. Although the participants in the questionnaire assess the risks, the

following questions show that they do not possess the necessary specific knowledge and skills for protection in the Internet environment. Only 13% of respondents said they have the skills to create a strong and secure password when using Internet applications/tools. Even fewer respondents know (7%) what is safe to share/publish online and none are confident in their skills to shop safely online. Regarding the management of spam emails, only 6% of respondents are aware of how to identify such emails.

All analysed responses are visualized in a figure 10.

Figure 10: Self-assessment in Safety in Internet



The fifth one is related to the knowledge in *Problem Solving*.

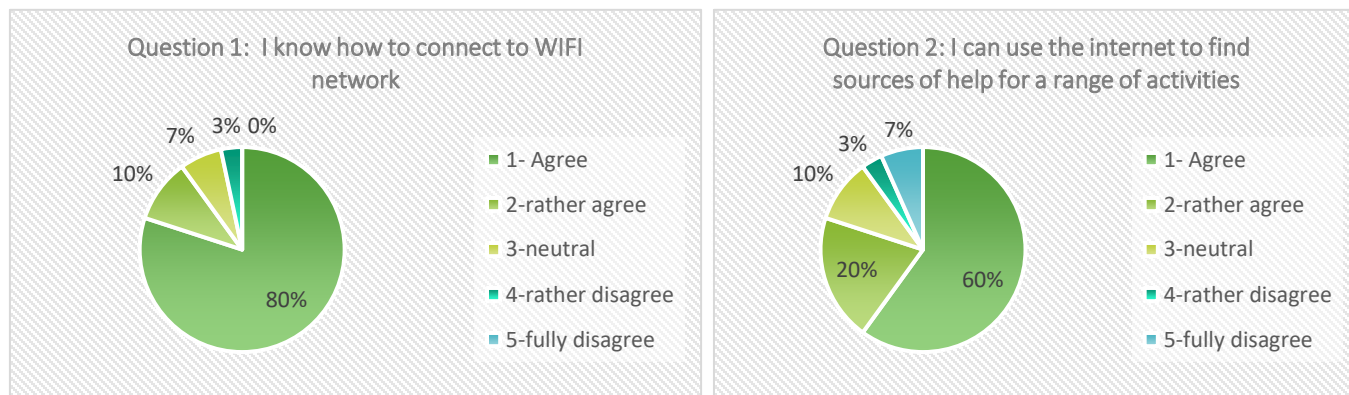
Solving the problems of accessing and finding information on the Internet is also an important basis for effective communication.

The questions are related to assessing some basic skills, such as getting started with the Internet. Respondent responses indicate that 90% are confident in their online networking skills. The majority of participants (80%) responded that they could easily find sources of help on the Internet. A small part of the respondents (24%) consider that they have sufficient skills to communicate when they need information and questions with chat applications on websites.

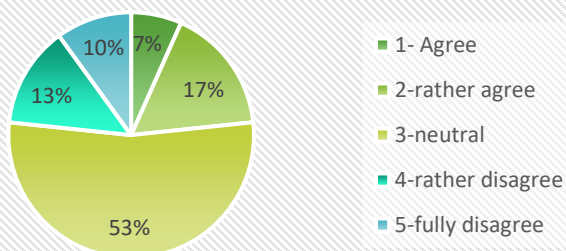
When it comes to working with mobile devices, including downloading apps, only 33% of respondents confirm that they feel confident on the subject. A small number of respondents assessed that they had the necessary skills to solve problems by using forums and accessing frequently asked questions when using devices, software, and applications on the Internet.

All analyzed responses are visualized in a figure 11.

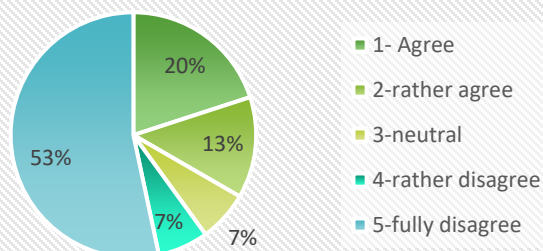
Figure 11: Self-assessment in Problem Solving



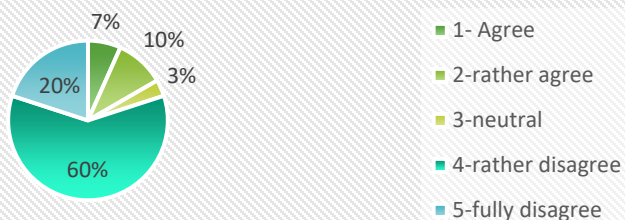
Question 3: I can use chat facilities (where available) on websites to help me solve problems



Question 4: I know how to download and use apps on my mobile device or tablet



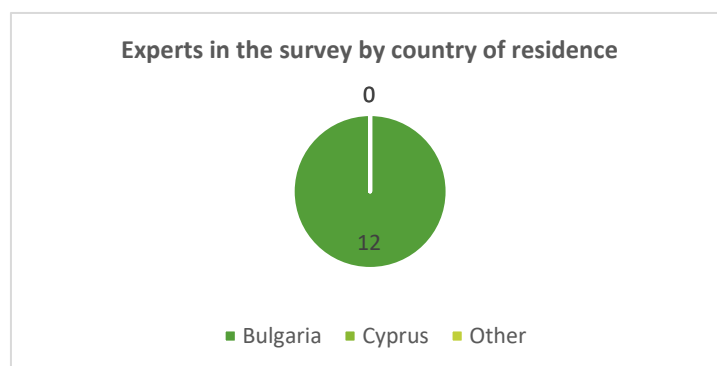
Question 5: I can use online tutorials, FAQs and advice forums to solve problems and improve my skills in using devices, software and applications



5. QUESTIONNAIRE TO ADULT TRAINERS

The questionnaire for adult trainers was disseminated among 20 experts, who leads/provides trainings or consultations for the target group (digital and other competences, motivational trainings, basic skills, mentors). The national survey is based on the completed questionnaires of 12 experts from Bulgaria (fig. 12).

Figure 12: Experts in the survey by country of residence



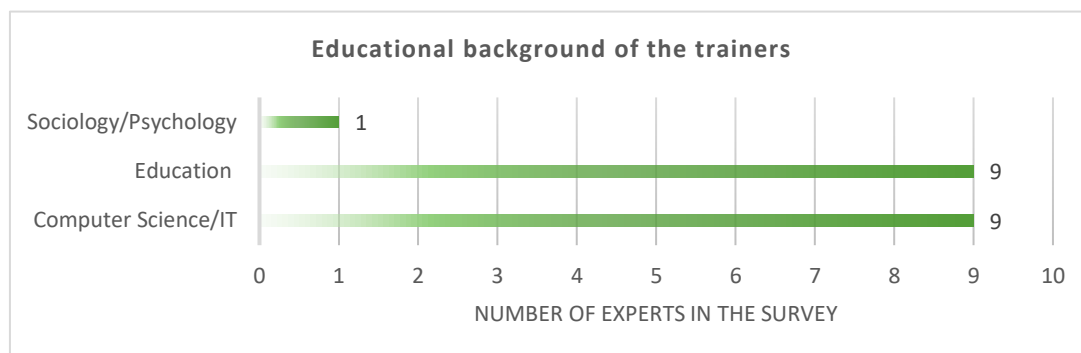
The biggest part of the experts in the survey have more than 5 years' experience (67%), and the rest of them have an experience 1-5 years (fig. 13)

Figure 13: Trainers' experience (in years)



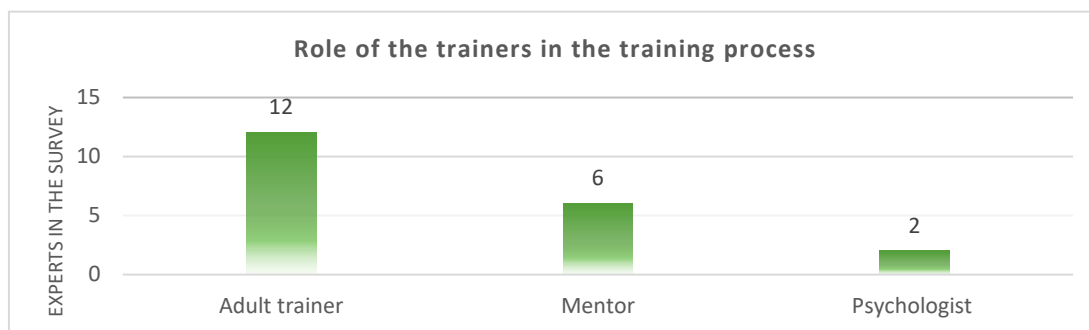
The experts are divided in their expertise, as 9 of them are trainers in ICT, 9 – education in common and 1 of them is a psychology/sociology trainer (fig. 14).

Figure 14: Educational background of the trainers



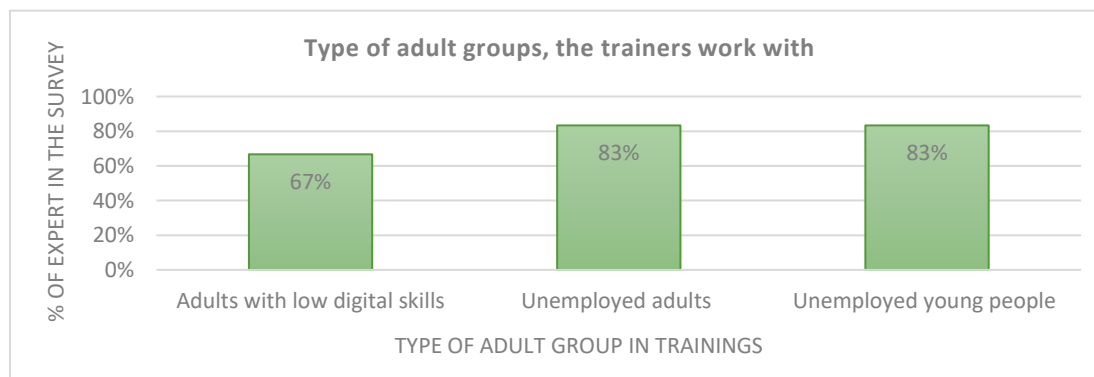
All the expert in the survey defined themselves as adult trainers, 6 of them are also mentors and 2 are providing psychological support in the educational process (fig. 15).

Figure 15: Role of the trainers in the training process



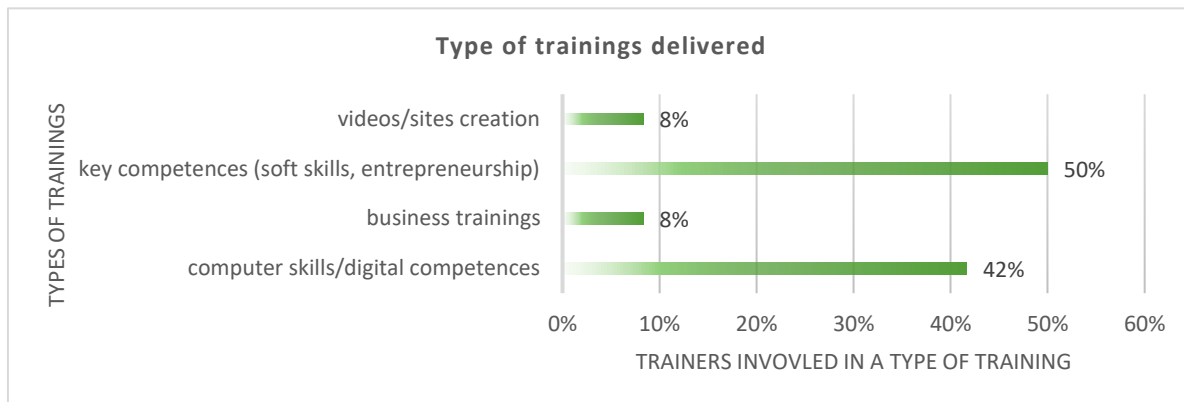
Trainers, encompassed by the survey have an experience working with the specific target group as 83% of them provided trainings for unemployed adults and young people, and 67% are working with adults with low digital skills (fig. 16).

Figure 16: Type of adult groups, the trainers work with



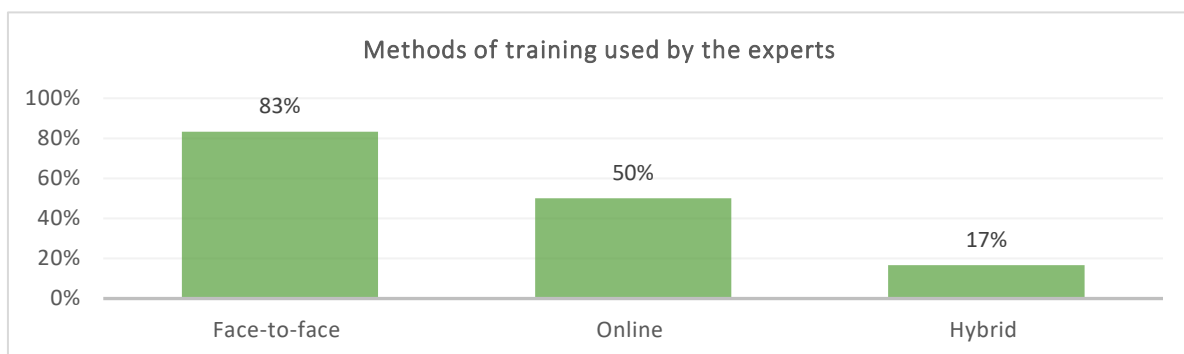
The experts share that they mostly often (50%) conduct trainings related to key competencies (soft skills, entrepreneurship, etc.), 42% conduct trainings on digital skills, 8% provide training on specific business skills and 8% on video creation content/website development (fig. 17).

Figure 17: Type of training delivered.



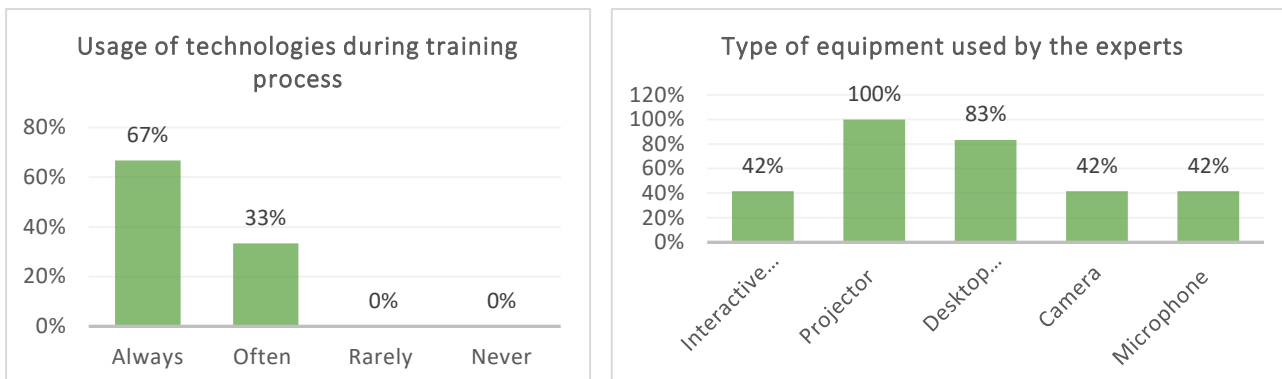
The most frequently used methods by experts include face-to-face training (83% of experts conduct this type of training), followed by online type of training - 50% and hybrid type of training - 17% (fig. 18).

Figure 18: Methods of training used by the experts.



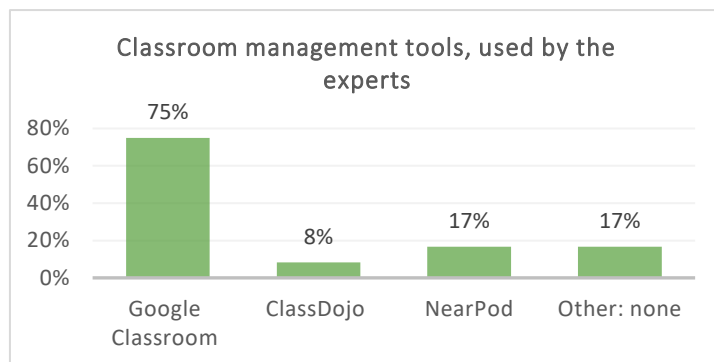
During the trainings, 67% of the experts say that they always use IT technologies, and 33% of them use them often. The most frequently used technologies when conducting trainings are a multimedia projector (100% of respondents), a laptop/tablets for training (83%), an interactive board (42%). A camera and a microphone are used by 42% of experts (fig. 19).

Figure 19: Usage of technologies during training process and type of equipment used by the experts



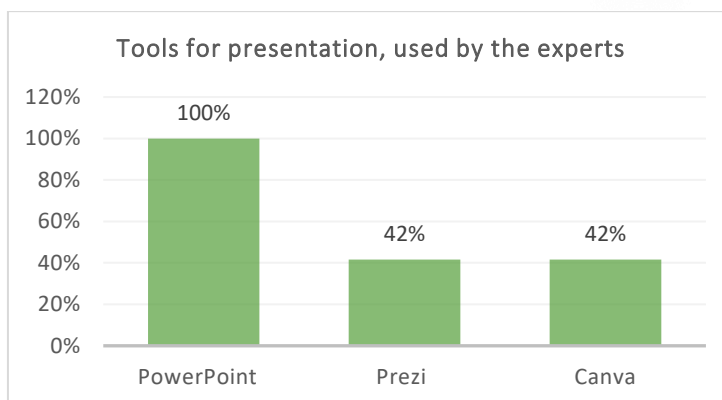
The most popular app for group management among educators is Google Classroom - 75% of experts, followed by Nearpod - 17% and ClassDojo – 8% (fig. 20).

Figure 20: Country



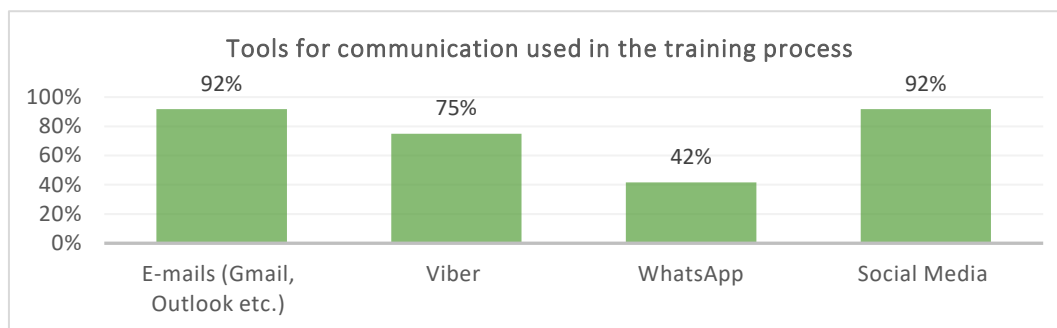
Experts point as the most used application for developing training presentations PowerPoint – used by 100% of the interviewed, 42% of them are also using Prezi or Canva (fig. 21).

Figure 21: Tools for presentation, used by the experts



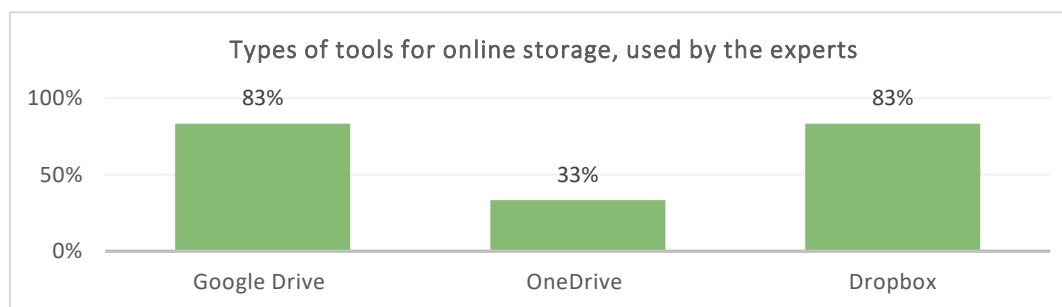
The experts says that e-mails and social media are the most popular ways for communication with the trainees (92%), followed by Viber communication – used by 75% of the experts and WhatsApp – 42% (fig. 22).

Figure 22: Tools for communication used in the training process



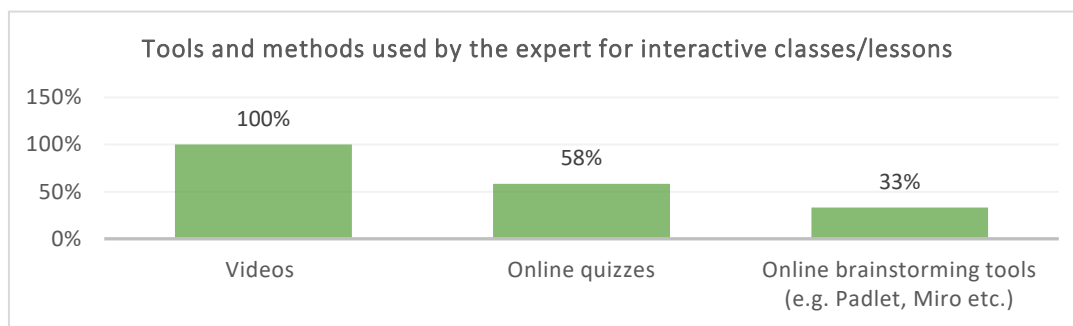
Respectively, the Internet tools used by the experts for storing and exchanging documents are as follows - 83% of them use Google Drive and Dropbox, and 33% - One Drive (fig. 23).

Figure 23: Types of tools for online storage, used by the experts



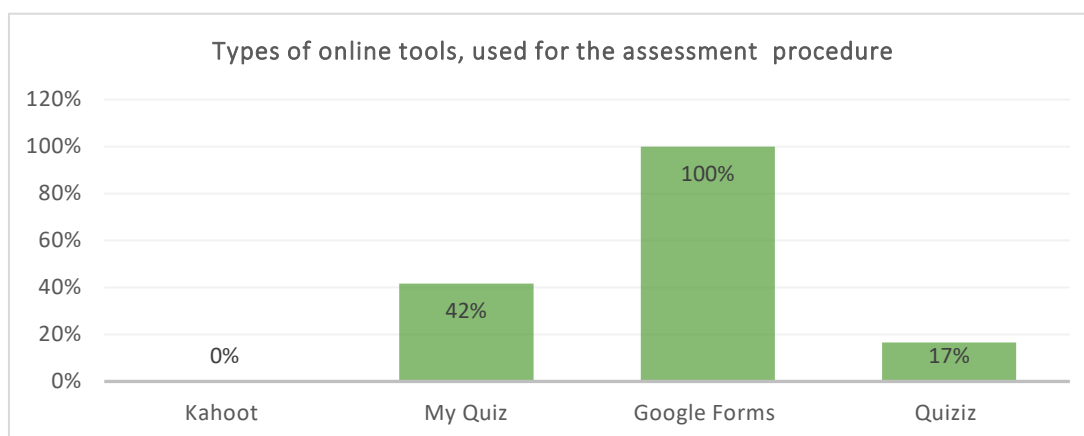
Regarding the use of interactive tools and methods, 100% of the experts shared that they prefer to include video, 58% are using an online quiz and 33% brainstorming applications (fig. 24).

Figure 24: Tools and methods used by the expert for interactive classes/lessons



Regarding the assessment procedure, the experts most often use online tools including Google forms (100%), online quizzes – My Qizz and Qiziz (69%), (fig. 25).

Figure 25: Types of online tools, used for the assessment procedure



In the questionnaire for trainers, an inquiry was made about the personal challenges that experts face when conducting trainings for adults.

the most serious challenge was assessed as social isolation, indicated by 58% of respondents, the lack of appropriate equipment - 33% and the lack of digital skills by teachers - 25%. All answers are presented in a Table 1.

Table 1. Challenges that affect personally adult trainers/mentors in adult education?

Items	1- Not at all	2-To a little extent	3-To some extent	4-To a great extent	5- To a very great extent
Lack of motivation	42%	33%	17%		8%
Lack of equipment	33%	33%			33%
Low level of education/basic skills	17%	33%	42%		8%

Lack of self-competence in digital settings	42%	17%	17%		25%
Social Isolation	17%		8%	17%	58%

In relation to the personal competences that a trainer/mentor must have, problem solving skills (100%), empowerment and support (92%), patience (92%) and communication skills (83%) are rated the highest. The answers are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Competences needed during digital skills training by adult trainers/mentor

Items	1- Not at all	2-To a little extent	3-To some extent	4-To a great extent	5- To a very great extent
Empowerment and support				8%	92%
Patience			8%		92%
Communication Skills			8%	8%	83%
Problem Solving Skills					100%
Creativity Skills			8%	17%	75%

6. CONCLUSION/ SUMMARY

Regarding the survey carried out among the target group - long-term unemployed, youth out of education and employment and adults in risk groups, as well as teachers and mentors working with them, the main conclusions will be used as base for further development of specific trainings, addressed to adults without or with low digital skills.

The knowledge and skills of the target group cover the minimum requirements for basic digital skills represented in the main areas - digital content creation, communication and collaboration, safety, problem solving, which would be of significant benefit, according to the current labour market requirements.

The participants in the survey use information technology, which makes it possible and adequate to develop interactive training materials as case studies or self-preparation materials, which will contribute to a more effective engagement of the participants in the trainings.

Trainers of adult people and mentors highlight the main possible features when designing trainings (including digital skills) – interactive teaching methods, online training materials, various internet methods for presentation, communication and tasks for training the trainees have been introduced and are actively used in the last years.

When designing trainings for adults it is critically to incorporate techniques and topics for motivation and engagement of the trainees, which can be a prerequisite for the successful conduct of the trainings and acquisition of the necessary knowledge and skills.

