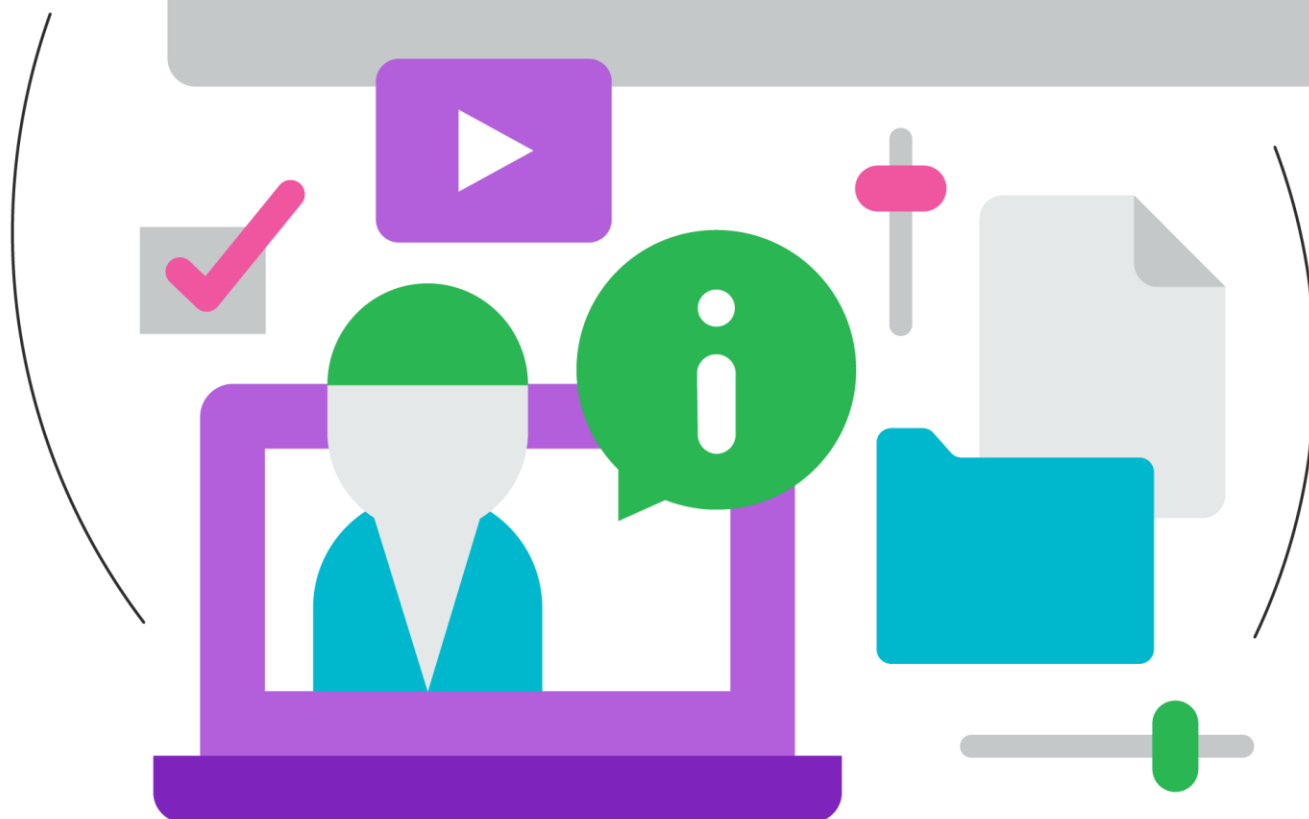




WP2. A4. Focus Group International Report

*A.4. Young Migrants Focus Group
International Report by RightChallenge*



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Introduction

The globalization of the Internet has made the spreading of knowledge and information free and accessible to almost everyone with access to a computer or smartphone. This offered a great opportunity from most disadvantaged groups to access to relevant information and to facilitate their learning via non-formal environments (Leshner et al., 2022). However, the fast and increased spread of Internet access to almost everyone, has also made easy the boost of untruths and misinformation online. In a world where most of us are digitally connected, it is critical the managing of the amount of information we receive daily, and identify the reliable ones, so people can, exercise their social, civic, political and economic choices and decisions with knowledge and free of prejudice, malintention and unconsciousness (Leshner et al., 2022).

Migrants are a particular group at a disadvantage for disinformation and untruths online. In this matter, research shows that social media and internet comprehend one of the primary sources of information for migrants, before and during the process of transitioning to a new country, thus calling for a necessity to cultivate critical thinking and digital competences in this group (Beretta et al., 2018). This paper presents here the international results of the focus groups delivered in **six different countries** (Cyprus, Portugal, Austria, Sweden, Ukraine and Germany) with young migrants with different cultural and ethnic backgrounds, which aimed to assess young migrants' digital experiences with disinformation, their habits, preferences and strategies regarding online information search, critical thinking and media/ information/ digital literacy. These results will later serve as a framework for the development of the **Digital4All Capacity Building Activity/ Training**, aimed to increase competences of youth workers with knowledge, attitudes and skills on critical thinking, digital competences and participatory approaches, so they can enhance migrant's intentions and abilities to assess information online. The endorsement of the here identified barriers and facilitators of a safe access and a responsible navigation through digital information, as perceived by the young migrants themselves, will, guarantee that the training capacitation will more likely achieve its aim.



Figure 1. Focus Group on Portugal.

Methodology

Participants

A sample of **twenty-nine** young migrants participated in the focus group developed in the partner countries: Five participated in Cyprus, Ukraine and Austria, six in Sweden and four in Germany and Portugal. Participants mainly identified as **women** (69,0%) and the average age was **23,1 years** old. Nationalities composing the focus groups were diverse, although the main countries of origin were the **Philippines, Ukraine and Brazil** (Table 1.). At the moment of the focus groups, all participants were migrants for more than one month.

Gender		Country of Origin	N
Female	20 (69,0%)	Ukraine	9 (31,0%)
Male	9 (31,0%)	Philippines	5 (17,2%)
		Brazil	3 (10,3%)
		Turkey	3 (10,3%)
		Senegal	1 (3,45%)
		India	1 (3,45%)
		France	1 (3,45%)
		Kenya	1 (3,45%)
		Serbia	1 (3,45%)
		Luxemburg	1 (3,45%)
		Iraq	1 (3,45%)
		Romania	1 (3,45%)
		Sao Tome	1 (3,45%)
Total	29 (100%)	Total	29 (100%)

Table 1 Descriptive statistics (gender and nationality) of the focus group samples.

Recruitment was carried through SM platforms (i.e., Instagram and Facebook) and e-mail channels, with the support of the organisation's network and partnerships. An informed consent was first introduced so participants would be aware of the purpose of the focus group, confidentiality of the gathered information and the volunteer nature of their participation (Appendix A.)



Figure 2. Focus Group in Sweden.

Measures and Procedure

Data collection was organized in **two stages**. The **first phase** included the collection of socio-demographic data using a **Socio-Demographic Questionnaire**. In effort to balance the characteristics of the final sample, it was asked participants the gender they identified with, nationality and the number of years that they have been a migrant. The **second phase** focused on the facilitation of the focus group, where participants were instructed regarding of what could be expected from a focus group and from their performance. The focus groups were mainly developed in physical spaces (80%), face-to-face.

With the participants' consent, all partners audio recorded their focus groups, to facilitate later results' analysis.

Focus Group Moderation

All focus groups discussions began with informal and "Break the Ice" activities to make participants more familiar, resonated, and comfortable with each other. In these, participants shared some of their interests, goals and ambitions. These were followed by the focus group discussion of **key-questions**, prior developed by the WP's leader, RightChallenge (Appendix B.), related to the focus group's aim.

Focus Group Management and Analysis

Audio data from the focus groups were all first transcribed into a word format. Analysis of the five focus groups' discussions followed the **Thematic Analysis Framework**, in which involved the development of codes, categories and themes, accordingly to the experiences and knowledge of young migrants with disinformation online.

Focus Group Documentation

Main findings of the focus groups were all documented in **National Focus Groups Reports** by each partner. These can be accessed through the Appendix C.

The current report comprehends a more **holistic** analysis of the findings, comprising an analysis of the main themes that emerged from the national focus groups and highlighting the main similarities and differences between each country.

Results

Figure 3. presents a conceptual map of the categories identified to explain young migrant's experiences with disinformation and untruths online. **Three main themes emerged from the discussion:** 1) Challenges Young Migrant's face in accessing to Reliable Information; 2) Elements of young migrants' resilience in avoiding untruths online; and 3) Strategies to cultivate young migrant's experiences reflection and critical thinking competences.

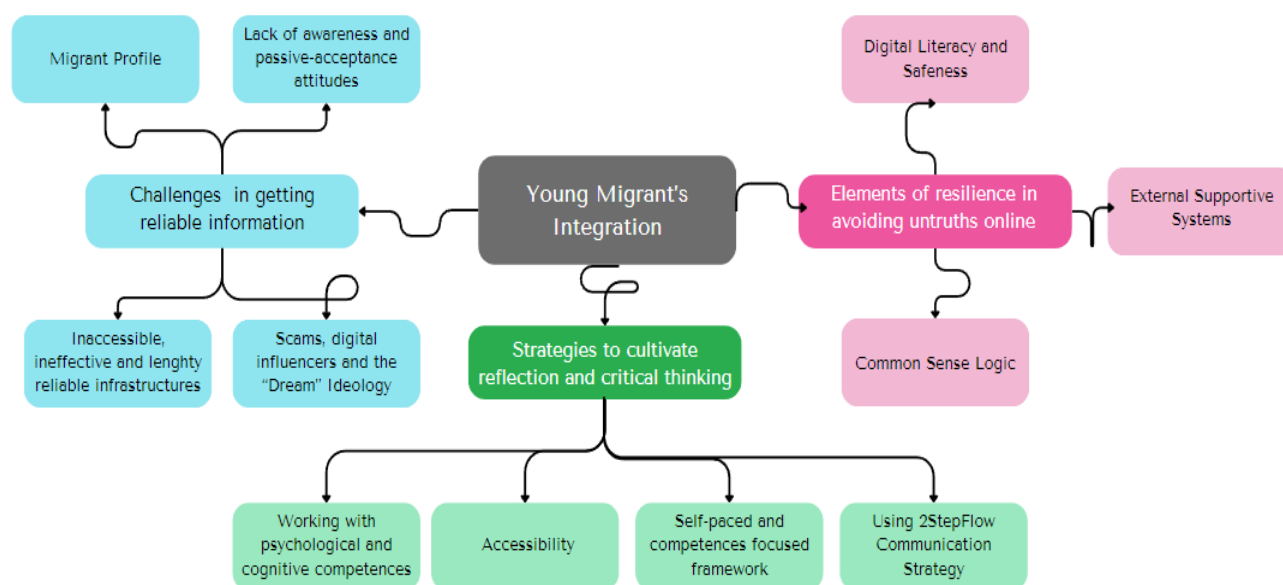


Figure 3. Themes originated from the national's focus groups discussions.

Theme: Challenges Young Migrant's face in accessing to Reliable Information

The unique challenges that emerged from the focus groups discussions concentrated heavily on the inefficiency of external sources in obtaining reliable information and the need to engage with other informational tools.

Category: Inaccessible, ineffective and lengthy reliable infrastructures

In almost all of the discussions, the inaccessibility, the ineffectiveness and lengthy services from reliable infrastructures, such as the Social Security, Finances, Transport systems and the Foreign Service and Borders, was mentioned as unique challenges to young migrants. Amongst them, language barriers were the most highlighted by participants, as well as those related to bureaucratic moments. Outdated, unorganized and unstructured information was referred to from official sources.

“I, at least, agree that the idea of influencers is to gain money by showing that Portugal is amazing, that everything is inexpensive, that houses are for free, that there is place for everyone, that people don't have to be worried about looking for a bedroom because it is easy, right?”

-Portugal

Category: Scams, Digital Influencers and the “Dream” Ideology

Besides official and government sources and bodies, all young migrants were prompted to share that they often use social media channels and digital resources for obtaining information relevant to their integration in their foreign country. Telegram, WhatsApp, blogs, YouTube, Tik-Tok and Instagram were mentioned. However, this source of information too revealed to be ineffective, and even negative, in obtaining reliable and relevant data to most of young migrants' experiences. Scams were cross mentioned, mostly in actively finding residence and accommodation. Young migrants also experienced scams passively, when not looking for information: in e-mails, through the telephone and in social media channels. Disinformation and untruths online encountered were said to be present in images, in statistics and in misleading titles.

Digital influencers were strongly emphasized by young migrant's living in Portugal and the dream ideology that they spread, though illusory. Due to populist nature of digital influencers speech, young migrants shared that young migrants come to Portugal with unrealistic expectations based on false information that these sources share.

“You are the best profile of the scammers, immigrants, entry point.”

-Germany

Category: Migrant Profile

Focus group led in Germany and Ukraine, who took place with nine young Ukrainians, four of which who were at the time, under temporary protection and five in Dnipro, highlighted the impact of the migrant profile in obtaining relevant and reliable information. For example, due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine and forced displacement, in addition to the universal experiences of migration (i.e., language and cultural barriers) mentioned cross-focus groups, young Ukrainians shared idiosyncratic challenges related to the uncertainty of the situation – “None of the Ukrainians had gone through this before, so there are no Ukrainian articles”.



Figure 4. Focus Group in Dnipro.

“It was scary, not understanding what I would be living on”

-Germany

Participants in Dnipro added that the accessibility of reliable information was further a barrier for refugees staying in Ukraine, as across the years of Russia’s invasion, disclosure of media information went through varies changes – blocking of television channels and opposition media – that not included the dissemination of unbiased news.

“As the frequency of events increased, every day there were more and more tragic and resonant events. On this basis it become easier to throw in false information and mislead”

-Ukraine

Category: Lack of Awareness and Passive-Acceptance Attitudes towards evaluating information Online

In particular from the focus groups in Portugal and Sweden, young migrants’ attitudes and experiences towards RGPD and evaluation information online were passive. Participants from the focus group in Sweden viewed RGPD as a situation where they had no choice and authority to restrain from, resulting in passively accepting all the requirements. As to Portugal, one participant revealed that evaluation of information online, in their experience, depended on their motivation and interest to do so.

“Sometimes it is whatever if it is true or false...”

-Portugal

Theme: Elements of young migrants' resilience in avoiding untruths online

In general, all young migrants in the different focus groups revealed awareness for the unreliability of information online, specifically in social media platforms – “Online access social media, you don’t know where the information comes from” (Participant from Austria Focus Group). Journalism was also envisioned as a source of misleading and unbiased information, in particularly to refugees in Dnipro, which highlighted low quality journalism as a source for misinformation.

Category: Digital Literacy and Safeness

Throughout the focus groups discussion, a wide sample of participants mentioned to depend on their digital literacy competences to acknowledge misinformation and to distinguish unreliable from reliable data. Most young migrants used strategies related to the comparison of information using different data sources (*double-checking*), on identifying reliable elements in websites (i.e., government sites, reputable sources) and of any missing information. Participants from Austria added using Artificial Intelligence as a moderately reliable tool (Table 3.).

Strategies	Time	Feasibility	Complexity
Using of Artificial Intelligence	Short	Medium	High
Visiting reputable new platforms and Cross-comparison	Short	Possible	Medium

Table 2. Evaluation focus group participants from Austria made regarding the main strategies they use for evaluating reliability of information, in terms of ‘Time’, ‘Feasibility’ and ‘Complexity’.

In complement, participants from the focus group in Sweden strongly showed an increased use of the available social media and website tools to deal with identified scam – **Block and Report**.

“Critical thinking can save us from being blind”.

-Sweden

Additionally, critical thinking, although not mentioned regularly within and throughout focus groups, was cited by some participants as a significant contributor for not falling for scams and disinformation – “I look for the information in several other pages and then I question the information and don’t believe it straight away” (Participant from Sweden Focus Group).

Category: Common Sense Logic

In particular, participants from the focus group delivered in Sweden, shared to rely on their common sense logic to identify reliable information online – “Too good to be true”, “They have everything you want”, “They want money, this shows that they can be a scam”... (Participants from Sweden Focus Groups)

Category: External Supportive Systems

A significant portion of participants mentioned their external, more macro systems as supporters for the evaluation on information online. It included and ranged from closest migrant friends and family, their community in their new country, Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) and educational institutes.

In particular, one participant from Portugal mentioned that their enrollment in Journalism has led to a good network of journalists and communication experts that he can closely contact for support in this matter. Additionally, specifically for the young migrants participating in Cyprus' focus group, as students enrolled in tertiary education, their experiences with unreliable information were scarce and easily deconstructed by their institutional supporting system. Indeed, the youth worker that delivered the focus group in Cyprus contacted the director of young migrant's college and it was confirmed that the institution has, over time, established truthfulness regarding certain misconceptions and glamorization of moving to Cyprus.

“College enrollment and the support received by institutions can act as protective factors against untruths online”

-Cyprus

Theme: Strategies to cultivate young migrant's experiences reflection and critical thinking competences

Across the different focus groups, all young migrants found of significance a training directed to cultivating their digital and critical thinking competences. They showed interest in learning strategies to identify white from blue collar scams – “some are low quality and some are high” (Participant from Sweden Focus Group) -, on how to prevent them, on to identifying links and how to use critical thinking skills in personal and professional life.

The following categories represent suggestions and recommendations of young migrants regarding facilitators of the Digital4All program.

“For the others, you automatically turned rich, [they assume] that you live well in Europe. So I think that a work focused in expectation readjustment would be good, right?”

- Portugal

Category: Working with Psychological and Cognitive Competences

Participants of Portugal's focus group highlighted both psychological and metacognitive components as obstacles to evaluating information online. It was found that a program directed to digital literacy and critical thinking would have a higher probability of achieving its aim if it focused in fostering metacognition of migrants regarding self-monitorization and assessment of expectations regarding moving to a new country.

Category: Accessibility

Several young migrants of different countries' focus groups found accessibility a significant contributor for the achievement of the training's aim. The expectations mainly expressed by participants centered around making the capacitation accessible to young migrants – as often these initiatives fail to reach their target-groups – on its adaptation to different languages, and at a very minimum in English, and to online approaches.

“Digital Education can be more economic, doing daily chats, WhatsApp.”

-Sweden



Figure 5. Focus Group in Cyprus.

Category: Self-Paced and competences-focused framework

Participants from Cyprus suggested a self-paced training program, adapted to the trainee's distinct competencies and limitations.

Category: Using a 2StepFlow Communication Strategy

Finally, participants from Portugal's focus group strongly put an emphasis on using the 2StepFlow communication strategy with reliable influencers as a facilitator for promoting the spread of reliable information online.

“(...) so what needs to be done is making sure that the information does not stay only in the website and that is spread also (...). Maybe talking with influencers and tell them to share, make a video, (...).

-Portugal

Discussion and Conclusions

The consortium's main objective was to explore young migrant's experiences with disinformation and untruths online and to develop a conceptual understanding of the unique migrant's digital and critical needs and of the resources and strategies necessary to cultivate their reflection on these.

Our proposed conceptual understanding, based on the experiences of young migrants in Portugal, Cyprus, Germany, Austria, Ukraine and Sweden, reveals the participant's unique needs as migrants who are easily subjected to disinformation and untruths online as well as elements of their resilience. The **inaccessibility, ineffectiveness of and lengthy reliable infrastructures**, the **online scams, digital influencers and the “Dream” Ideology** that these propagate, and **migrants' profile** were the main unique challenges young migrants perceived in accessing to reliable information. Their resilience was

evident in their use of mainly **digital literacy and digital safeness competences, common sense logic** and of **external supportive systems** to evaluate information online.

Research around migrants' integration and information accessibility corroborate the findings of our focus groups. Previous studies have shown that the **informational needs of migrants and refugees**, although somewhat similar, differentiate from one and another, and thus, so do the informational sources. **Refugees** rely more heavily on settlement service providers, experts and volunteers, likely due to the uncertainty of their situation and the trust issues arose from the trauma caused by the circumstances of their departure from their homeland (Beretta et al., 2018; Lloyd et al., 2013). In another note, migrants use, as primary sources, social networks and the internet to look for information, following teachers, classmates and settlement workers, such as intercultural mediators (Beretta et al., 2018). Therefore, unique challenges faced by refugees alone, we argue, require that the capacity building we aim to develop, engages the participation of **settlement service providers** and other experts or/and volunteers in this area, as they will likely be more trustworthy resources for this profile, and thus more likely to promote their successful inclusion and participation. On the other hand, social media being one of the primary sources used by migrants to obtain information, Digital4All, as one participant mentioned, could be extended to **digital influencers**.

Supporting our results are studies showcasing that migrant's internet-related main challenges in engaging with information constitute the **scattering, language inaccessibility and outdatedness** of information (Beretta et al., 2018). Misinformation that is spread by internet and social media has been indicated as a challenge for migrants. For example, researchers have shown that one of the reasons that influenced various asylum seekers and refugees to come to Europe was related to an overly optimistic picture of the destination country social media networkers portrayed it (Ruokolain & Widén, 2020). This strengthens the need of our project and the training it seeks to develop, as it was proposed to foster critical thinking and digital competences of young migrants, due to their vulnerability to untruths online. Indeed, the success of our young migrants participants in dealing with information engagement, depended on their digital competences, specifically the dimensions of **'Digital Literacy'** and **'Safeness'** of DigiCom Framework (Vuorikari et al., 2022) and critical thinking. Moreover, as barrier languages are a universal challenge amongst asylum seekers, refugees and migrants in general, as highlighted by the experiences of our participants, the language accessibility of Digital4All program should be a requirement, rather than an option.

Additionally to digital competences, our participants mentioned that the use of strategies that represent the 'common sense' logic supported their effective navigation through Internet. Although **common sense** comprehends a necessary decision-making tool due to its low consuming cognitive resources, it lacks optimization, and the option for a **low-demanding strategy** in evaluating reliability of information may not, at the least, be the best option (Ross, 2012). Therefore, the success of the Digital4All training in achieving its aims could work best and have more sustainable results if addresses heuristics and its common generating bias, in complementary to other approaches.

The fast and increased spread of internet to almost anyone and the experiences migrants have had with misinformation online (Leshner et al., 2022) also highlights one of the suggestions made by participants concerning the need for cultivating **metacognition** strategies of young migrants, as a means for awareness of own expectancies and as a guide to direct an intentional, more active and

critical behavior in evaluating information online. Finally, as a further suggestion by focus group participants, the Digital4All could be improved by adopting a **self-paced and competency-based** education approach to overcome idiosyncratic needs and abilities, and to be more versatile and adapted to a different suit and profile of migrants.

In conclusion, to best achieve its aim, Digital4All capacity building should embrace all the suggestions and perceptions here represented. A summary of the experiences and made recommendations can be found in the Figure 7. below.



Figure 6. Focus Group in Germany.



Figure 7. Summary of experiences and recommendations of young migrants regarding digital misinformation and Digital4All Capacitation Training, respectively.

Limitations

Results from our national focus groups should be considered carefully. The dynamics and methodology inherent of the focus groups make this qualitative method a powerful tool to deepen understanding regarding the experiences of the aimed target-group. However, they are not representative, as they are often convenience and small samples, and, therefore, results cannot be generalized to all young migrants population. Moreover, and specifically in the focus groups delivered within Digital4All project, there are additional limitations:

- **Diverse cultural and ethnic-background sample:** No analysis was possible to be done regarding the differences between countries in young migrants experiences, as the sample included diverse nationalities
- **Homogeneous sample in years of being migrants:** No analysis was possible to be developed regarding differences in information engagement between newly and settled-arrivers.
- **Heterogeneous sample:** the sample of focus group in Cyprus included young migrants with a student visa, which is a limitation to the identification of more universal unique challenge young migrants face with disinformation.
- **Differential Focus Group Analysis procedures:** partners in the consortium developed the analysis they found best fitting for their results. The inconsistency in the analysis methods may constitute an hazard for the reliability of our main findings.

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Annexes

Appendix A.



Focus Group Consent Form for Erasmus Plus KA2 Project

Project: "Building a Digital World for All"

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

Research project aim: promoting digital and media literacy in migrants and fostering their competences to critically and efficiently evaluate information online.

Moderator:

Date and Place of the focus group:

Estimated Duration: 2 Hours

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

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

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

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

Voluntary Nature: The participation in this questionnaire is voluntary.

If you have any questions you can contact [insert here the researcher's name] through the following e-mail: [insert the researcher partner's mail here].



  Co-funded by the European Union

Please check the box, if you agree to be video and audio recorded:

☐ I agree

☐ I do not agree

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

☐ I agree

☐ I do not agree

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

☐ I agree

☐ I do not agree



Figure 8. Consent Form used by all partner organisations prior the development of the focus group discussions.

Appendix B.

Order	Question
1	<i>As migrants, what were the main difficulties you expected and encountered in moving to a new country?</i>
2	<i>What were the main tools and methods you used to obtain information on how to overcome these obstacles?</i>
3	<i>[if adequate] Were any of that information obtained online? What online means did you use?"</i>
4	<i>What were the main barriers you found in the online access to these types of information?</i>
5	<i>Did it ever happen to you to be deceived or misinformed online during this search for information? In what cases? What type of misinformed or erroneous information was present?</i>
6	<i>What strategies do you often use to not be misinformed or deceived online?</i>
7	<i>How did you assess the adequacy and efficiency of this strategies accordingly to 'achieved results', 'time', 'complexity' and 'feasibility'?</i>
8	<i>Can you think of any factors that makes it difficult for you to do an evaluation of information online?</i>
9	<i>[if adequate] Did you ever feel that motivation was a barrier for you to proceed to an evaluation of information online? What are some possible reasons, in your experience, that may have led to this lack of motivation?</i>
10	<i>What are your thoughts on developing a training program on digital literacy, critical thinking and motivation strategies regarding the assessment of information online for migrants?</i>
11	<i>What are some barriers that you can find in participation of migrants in this training program? And in another note, what are some advantages in developing and participating in this program?</i>

Table 3. Key-Questions discussed between participants in the focus group.

Appendix C.

Country	Link Access	Organisation
Austria National Report	https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1aGAXscUGw-hqZNWO7wzqp5i8L7Q1aYxJ	IZB (institute fur Zukunft und Bildung)
Cyprus National Report	https://docs.google.com/document/d/1miGo9nt-NClIXEqKxEKJuGz5jrd9dihr/edit?rtf=true	Centre for Advancement of Research and Development in Educational Technology LTD - CARDET
Portugal National Report	https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1ae8NfBdXCv6vMUBjclJc2ZGH159kdqBe	RightChallenge
Sweden National Report	https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/18qSfLgk6dx-TE_arBiyfIE-9O18bEXG1	Mobilizing Expertise AB
Germany National Report	https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/14iYHJ3aEhbKAbohlkGLdWqfKOrRH4xe	NGO “Non-formal education for youth”
Ukraine National Report	https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1ZRdljk75oajfCBBsb-l4dcK7fNFyV9AB	NGO “Non-formal education for youth”

Table 3. Archive System for each National Report under the Digital4All Erasmus+ KA2 Project.

