Welcome to the Our Digital Village newsletter!

Our Digital Village project aims t**o intervene in rural areas by promoting the acquisition of digital and transversal skills**, preparing people to face the challenges of the future. It will do so by **co-creating high-quality educational content** that responds to **the needs of the local context**, while simultaneously ensuring the long-term transformation towards digitalization through active awareness raising on all levels of society.

The project started in January 2023 and will last until the end of 2025.

As we are finalising the first year of the project's implementation, we are excited to share some highlights:

✅Organisation of the training of trainers on Reciprocal Maieutic Approach (RMA): Since the first part of the project focused on identifying problems and needs of rural communities about digital education using the Reciprocal Maieutic Approach of Danilo Dolci, training on RMA was organised by an expert coordinator from CSC in order to let 12 trainers of partner organization to learn how to use the methodology

✅Publishing the Manual and methodological framework on RMA for context analysis: after the training of trainers on RMA, a Manual was published as a core document to support the implementation of the self-analysis workshops in rural areas functioning as a reference for maieutic coordinators during the workshops and as a resource for future trainers who want to create change in education through participatory processes

✅Organisation of the info sessions: In order to raise awareness about the importance of digital and transversal skills, a series of info sessions will be organised in rural areas during the project lifetime. The first round of info sessions related to the presentation of the project and to the importance of digital skills for the labour market, education, for citizens, and for life was already completed reaching more than 120 people

✅Engaging municipalities, educational institutions and organisations in rural areas of Austria, Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Poland, Portugal, and Romania: during the first phase of the project, the partners have identified educational institutions and public authorities who will support the project's implementation in order to create an educating community called the Digital Village Community

✅Organisation of 9 workshops per implementing country, reaching 276 participants: based on the training on RMA and on the Manual, self-analysis workshops have been implemented in each country with educational staff, students, adult learners and policy makers to identify local needs and share them amongst members of the different groups thus increasing awareness, understanding and sense of community.

✅Organisation the training of ICT experts: To follow up on the needs, desires and solutions identified in the self-analysis workshops, a co-design process will be initiated to create practical educational solutions to improve digital and transversal skills. In order for technical project staff to support the co-design process of the educational materials 10 ICT experts were trained in Italy on the

potential of maker technologies

✅Kick-start of the work on co-designing ODV Activity Kit: Maieutic coordinators, ICT experts, teachers and trainers started working towards the creation of an interactive online and printable kit including ICT challenges using technologies such as 3D printing, coding, microcontrollers, web development and robotics as well as pedagogical guidelines and tools to accompany the implementation of those activities in class.

As the majority of our efforts in 2023 were dedicated to preparing and organizing **participatory context analysis in rural areas**, this first newsletter will focus on presenting its results

Project partners organised **9 workshops per implementing country**, involving students, educational staff, adult learners and policy makers.

The needs of each target group have been identified individually and then discussed within mixed groups during workshops. These workshops offered opportunities for dialogue between groups that might not typically engage with each other's concerns, such as learners and policy makers. This fostered the sense of awareness, understanding, and community among participants.

We invite you to take a look at our website to learn more about the project and follow us on LinkedIn.

Have a good reading!

Participatory context analysis in rural areas - what are the main results?

Austria

In total, 48 participants were reached throughout 9 workshops organised in Austria. During these workshops, the youngsters expressed their wish for more than just the basic digital skills. They are eager to explore new and emerging technologies and highlighted the importance on online safety. Moreover, from the results it is clear that school and educational institutions have an important role in

fostering digital skills and offering courses on advanced level. There is a need for local authorities to develop more online platforms and services tailored to the needs of the community. Additionally, participants expressed the importance of the collective learning and trainings ensuring that everyone, irrespective of age, feels competent with digital tools.

Cyprus

43 participants were reached through the workshops organised in Cyprus. Based on the results, there is an unanimous need for updated equipment, including interactive boards, projectors, and computers. Educators and adult learners seek comprehensive training programs to improve their digital skills. Consequently, there is a desire to transition from conventional textbooks to digital tablets, providing easier access to educational resources and lightening the physical load for students. Additionally, the participants expressed strong eagerness for enhanced learning experiences by integrating advanced digital tools such as 3D printing, coding, and robotics. Moreover, participants stated that there is a need for improved communication channels, both within the educational setting and for broader community

engagement.

Greece

In total, 43 participants took part in the self-analysis workshops. Students expressed the need to acquire fundamental digital skills, including using computers, conducting online searches and how to be safe online. Adult learners expressed the desire digitalisation of services at community and state level, access to training for advancing digital skills, and the use of digital technologies for practical purposes. From the side of educational staff, there is a need for increased municipal investment in digitalising public services, and upgrading school facilities with modern technological equipment. Moreover, the availability of technological equipment in schools is often constrained, with limited provisions from the state, hence the need of more investment in this area.

Italy

37 participants took part in 9 workshops organised. Students involved in the workshops express the need to improve digital skills for the future labour market, learn how to create apps, and be autonomous in using digital programs.

Educational staff needs more training and guidance on how to use and teach about digital tools, learn more about editing, coding, web development, 3D printing and to acquire skills that can be used in the classrooms and in the community. Adult learners express the need to have targeted educational offers for different age groups and level of digital skills (from basic to advanced). Furthermore, there is a shared aspiration to advance the integration of technologies into daily life, both on a personal and professional level.

Poland

In Poland, 30 participants took part in the workshops. Based on their replies, and in response to the growing importance of digital skills in today's world, an innovative educational initiative could be the establishment of a Digital Skills Hub. This hub would serve as a comprehensive learning center designed to empower individuals of all ages with essential digital competencies. Moreover, there is a need to increase the awareness of transversal digital competences and support development of digital skills from basic to advanced level, equip individuals with the responsibility and autonomy to create digital content, increase the knowledge regarding cybersecurity, increase the

knowledge and awareness on new and emerging technologies (such as AI and IoT).

Portugal

In total, 35 participants were reached through the workshops. From the perspective of the students, there is a need for better internet access for effective digital engagement, showing practical applications of computers and their benefits, receiving guidance on responsible online behaviour and cybersecurity, as well as customised training based on the prior knowledge of participants. From the perspective of educational staff, there is a need for better public infrastructure, training to improve their proficiency in using digital tools and technologies for teaching, information on technologies and security, specific training for school-related needs with instruction on relevant topics, such as 3D printing. Lastly, adult learners point out the need for flexible and free training offers focusing on applying digital skills in practical context, helpdesk for elderly population and encouraging intergenerational learning. They also express the need of raising awareness of online safety.

Romania

40 participants took part in the workshops organised in Romania. The participants expressed the need for better infrastructure, easier access to technology, more digitalisation and better equipped computer labs. Moreover, they expressed the need to gain more knowledge of 3D modelling and printing, web development, coding, and robotics. The participants also shared the need and desire for developing a stronger partnership between the students and teachers, more communication with local authorities and companies specialised in the ICT field, and a better cooperation at local level between the authorities and the schools, developing partnerships with Higher Education Insitutions to provide high quality training.

Next steps

During the second year of the project, **the activity kit** will be finalised. It will contain an introductory part that underlines the importance of digital skills in the contemporary digitalised world, a second part that will display a pool of 50 ICT challenges using digital and creative technologies such as robotics, coding, microcontrollers, 3D modelling and printing, and web-development to solve real life problems in rural areas, and a third part with general pedagogical guidelines which will help teachers and trainers to implement the activities based on the local context and a last section dedicated to extra resources for more self-study.

This kit will then be tested in the rural areas of each country during a training for

teachers and trainers and subsequently through ICT courses for school students and adult learners, to evaluate the effectiveness of the training materials of enhancing digital and transversal skills and to improve them through lived experience.

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