

WP2: Local context and needs analysis



Co-funded by
the European Union

Developed by: Municipality of Lousada

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Project number	2022-2-IT01-KA210-VET-000101214
Project title	Municipalities Experimenting with Digital Innovation, Upskilling and the Metaverse
Project Acronym	MEDIUM
Start of the project	01/04/2023
End of the project	30/09/2024
Title of the Project Results (PR)	Local context analysis and needs assessment
Delivery date	23/10/2023
Dissemination level	Public
Responsible of the project result and contributors	Responsible: ML Contributors: ALDA, Commune D'Etterbeek, Centro Servizi Universitari Vicenza srl

Abstract of the PR

This activity aims to design a questionnaire to identify and analyze the level of digitization and knowledge/use of virtual identity tools and mechanisms in the local authorities involved. The aim is to collect the following information: personal experiences of the target groups with digital tools and virtual reality: i.e. technology available in the local context and level of digitalization in the partner municipalities; target groups' general digital skills and knowledge of new immersive technologies; target groups' consideration of these tools and their potential use at local level: i.e. personal interest, employees and sectors that are most interested in adopting immersive technology, potential obstacles, etc.

Interest of target groups in participatory strategies to better involve citizens in policy-making and service design; Target groups' experiences with VET initiatives and opportunities available at municipal level: i.e. past experiences, topics, best practices and most common problems.

The questionnaire was designed to be sufficiently broad and standardized to be applicable to contexts other than the project (replicability), to find out the results of the art of VET opportunities (online and offline) and the satisfaction index.

The technologies available in local contexts and the level of digitalization in partner municipalities are identified; the initial digital skills of the target groups are assessed; the opinion of the target groups on digital services and immersive technologies is detected. The target groups' interests and efforts towards participatory policy-making are assessed.

Revision history	
Version	Date
V.1	31/10/2023

Contents

Summary	6
1. Introduction	8
2. Process of questionnaire implementation	10
3. Survey results	10
3.1. General Information	10
3.2. Digitalisation and participation	13
3.3. Personal Knowledge and Inputs	17
4. Conclusions	24
Annex 1: Questionnaire	27

Summary

The project aims at educating on the uses and possibilities of new digital technologies in the field of virtual reality, augmented reality and the metaverse. The project will support the development of digital skills in the public sector contributing to its ongoing digital transition, meanwhile fostering innovation and accessibility to public services. The involved municipalities are called to think about how to use new digital technologies to further improve their services, exploring new ways to address societal issues and enhancing citizens' engagement in policy-making. Focusing on technologies that could take centre stage in the coming years, the project foresees training activities that will provide public officers with tools to both understand a digital context that keeps growing and changing and to improve the level of digitalisation of their working environment. Specifically, the project aims at: SO1. Experimenting innovative VET strategies by means of immersive digital technologies SO2. Contributing to a widespread digital culture within LAs overcoming potential resistances to digitalisation processes SO3. Sparking interest and stimulating ideas to improve public services and promote citizens' engagement and digital solutions to local needs.

With reference to the priorities of the programme, the design and implementation of training activities (A.3; A.4; A.5) will contribute to innovation in VET. This is the case with reference to both the means and the recipients of the training activities. Such training will be designed and delivered relying on innovative digital platforms and tools (i.e. visors, immersive technologies, online platforms etc.), hence experimenting with innovative ways to pass on knowledge, spark interest, and upgrade skills in a way that can possibly be useful to renovate and upgrade any kind of VET programme (SO1). Moreover, the target groups are made of a very specific category of professionals: public officers working in the partner municipalities, who will be provided with improved digital competences, both in terms of practical skills and personal outlook on digitalisation processes.

For this reason, the project also contributes to addressing digital transformation through development of digital readiness, resilience and capacity: allowing public officers to get closer to technologies that they are not familiar with but that will likely become more widespread in the following years, hence contributing to overcome possible resistance and benefit from their use and digitalisation in a broader sense (SO2). Common values, civic engagement, participation are also fostered (SO3), especially through the activities of consultation and development of pilot ideas (A.6). Such activities are intended to create a public environment where both public officers and citizens can benefit from the use of digital and virtual tools, strengthening service effectiveness, accessibility and civic engagement.

1. Introduction

The partners designed a questionnaire aimed at identifying and analyzing the level of digitization and knowledge/use of virtual identity tools and mechanisms in the involved local authorities. It is aimed at collecting the following information: target groups' personal experiences with digital tools and virtual reality: i.e. tech at disposal in the local context and level of digitalization in partner municipalities target groups' general digital skills and knowledge of new immersive tech target groups' consideration on these tools and their potential usage at local level: i.e. personal interest, employees and sectors that are more keen in adopting immersive tech, potential obstacles etc. target groups' interest in participatory strategies to better involve citizens in policy-making and service design

Target groups' experiences with Vocational Education and Training (VET) initiatives and available opportunities at the municipality level: i.e. past experiences, topics, best practices and most common problems. The questionnaire will be conceived to be wide and standardized enough to be applicable to other contexts beyond the project (replicability). The questionnaire will be co – designed and validated by the whole partnership through online work and delivered to the target groups in each partner municipality. ALDA+ and CSUV will help shape the questionnaire for what concerns relevant information to design the training activities and to ameliorate and modernise the existing VET opportunities. Partner municipalities, on the other hand, will contribute to shape the questionnaire so as to make it more relevant and consistent with the actual work Organisation of the municipalities' employees. A2.2. Consequently, partner municipalities are called to map relevant stakeholders that could benefit from/contribute to the implementation of virtual-reality-based services. For each of them, needs, priorities, interests and grounds for opposition will be identified, with the support of both ALDA+ and CSUV.

The partner organizations and especially the members of the Monitoring Committee were involved. The project managers/representatives of the partners worked on the design of the questionnaire based on their experience of working with digital tools/participatory practices in LAs (CSUV/ALDA+) or their experience of day-to-day work as civil servants (or professionals working closely with civil servants) in the partner municipalities.

This questionnaire was sent to the partner organizations and by the members of the PC (or professionals working closely with civil servants) in the partner municipalities. In this activity, ALDA+ and CSUV supported the Municipality of Lousada.

In this activity, ALDA+ and CSUV supported the partner municipalities in mapping and contacting the relevant stakeholders who could be positively affected by 1. Innovative digital VET methodologies; 2. Participatory digital services accessible through immersive technologies. Its guidance and support is justified by CSUV's experience in offering training and education programs exclusively through tools and by ALDA+'s experience in training and empowering LA officials and creating bridges between municipalities and civil society in the broadest sense.

Both activities were aimed at establishing the basis for the development of the training materials that will be used throughout the project.

We collected relevant information that will help the partners design adapted and effective training activities, which are effective and adapted to the needs and skills of the trainees. All the information has been collected to improve current VET opportunities by testing innovative educational practices. In addition, a solid analysis of needs and context will have a positive impact on the partnership in the likely event that further projects are developed on a larger scale.

The results are planned to be achieved through 2 activities:

A2.1 Codesign of the questionnaire - designed and validated by the whole Partnership;

A2.2 Map of relevant stakeholders.

In this sense, this report is the result of this activity and it aims

- The state of the art of VET opportunities (online and offline) and index of satisfaction are collected
- Technologies at disposal in the local contexts and level of digitalisation in partner municipalities are identified
- The starting digital skills of the target groups are assessed
- The target groups' judgement on digital services and immersive technologies is detected



2. Questionnaire application process

A first draft of the questionnaire was drawn up by Alda + and Lousada City Council, the partner organization responsible for the outcome of this project. Based on this first skeleton, the final questionnaire was co-designed by all the partners, i.e. 4 organizations from 3 countries.

The questionnaires were distributed to the municipalities of Lousada and Etterbeek, both on paper and online using Google Forms.

Given the working conditions of the partners at local level and the limitations of an Erasmus+ project, the statistical representativeness of the sample cannot be guaranteed. However, efforts were made to ensure the representativeness of the different types of discourse. The partners carried out a preliminary stakeholder identification phase, to cover each of the areas where stakeholders working with digital technologies are found: Municipalities and Schools.

In the end, as you will see below, the sector where the survey was most implemented is the municipal sector, so it is over-represented. This fact needs to be taken into account when analyzing the overall results. We collected a total of 27 questionnaires.

3. Analysis of results.

3.1. General information

Profile of the participants

The research involved 27 individuals from 2 different countries, the municipalities of the partner countries of the MEDIUM project consortium. The number of participants was as follows: Portugal (15) and Belgium (12).

Most of the participants were civil servants from local municipalities in Portugal and Belgium and work in professions such as: librarian, consultant, head of municipality, climate coordinator, clerk, operational manager (2), officer, administrative agent, environmental inspector, IT specialist (2), Technician (3), architect, archaeologist, town hall financier, manager (2), project manager (2),

service provider (2), senior communication technician, administrative technician, senior multimedia technician.

Table 1 Professional sector by country
What is your position within this public authority?

	Portugal	Belgium	Total
Librarian	0	1	1
IT Consultant	0	1	1
Head of municipality	0	1	1
Climate coordinator	0	1	1
Clerk	0	1	1
Operational manager	1	1	2
Officer	1	0	1
Administrative Agent	1	1	2
Environmental inspector	0	1	1
IT	1	1	2
Technician	3	0	3
Architect	0	1	1
Archeologist	1	0	1
Financer	1	0	1
Project Manager	2	0	2
Service provider	1	1	2
Senior communication technician	1	0	1
Administrative technician	1	0	1
Multimedia technician	1	0	1
Head "Democratic Participation"	0	1	1
Total	15	12	27

Source: Own production

Profile of the participants

The majority of the participants work in municipalities (18) or communes (3) and the rest work in public organizations (5) and libraries (1).

Table 2. Type of public authority

	Portugal	Belgium	Total
Librarian	0	1	1
Municipality	10	6	16
Commune	0	3	3
Public body	5	2	7
Total	15	12	27

*What type of public authority is it?
Source: Own production*

Regarding the size of the authority (number of employees), the answers vary, but are practically between 500 and 1500 employees.

Table 3: Size of the authority (employees)

	Portugal	Belgium	Total
<500	0	1	1
between 500 and a thousand	14	10	25
>1000	1	0	1
Total	15	12	27

Source: Own production

With regard to the question: What is the size of the municipality/region where the authority is located? there were some inconsistencies in the answers, in the sense that some answers included only the number of inhabitants, others the area per km² and others the area of the country they belong to. However, the number of inhabitants in both Belgium and Portugal is very similar, at approximately

48,000 inhabitants.

Regarding the area, in the case of Lousada it is around 96.08 km² and Etterbeek the information we are given is 3.14 km².

3.2. Digitalisation and Participation

On digitalization and participation, we focused on digital tools and platforms, digital system problems and challenges encountered by municipalities.

The participants of the survey were asked about the use of digital tools and platforms by their organization and the measures used to increase citizen participation about the use of digital tools and platforms, what measures has your organization taken to increase citizen participation and involvement in decision-making processes.

Table 4: Digitalisation tools

By using digital tools and platforms, which steps has your entity already taken to increase citizens participation and engagement in decision-making processes?

Portugal	Belgium
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Scheduling meetings ▪ Projects, such as the youth participatory budget ▪ SIGA, which is a platform for the parents of pupils in our schools ▪ access to workshops and conferences ▪ online surveys, online voting on projects, registration for activities ▪ promoting training in various areas for staff, in order to streamline electronic processes ▪ Providing public áreas ▪ Website 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Website ▪ Newsletter ▪ Facebook ▪ Newsletter ▪ Inboxes ▪ Questionnaires ▪ Flucity- Online Participatory tool ▪ Citizen consultation platform ▪ Open permits platform ▪ Email ▪ Mypermit platform ▪ Electronic meetings ▪ Interactive Maps

Source: Own production

Table 5: Digital System
As a public authority, what kind of digital system do you use as a digital tool?

Portugal	Belgium
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ I don't know/ i don't use (3) ▪ Email ▪ SIGA ▪ SIGMA ▪ Platforms ▪ Prisma ▪ Outlook ▪ Teams ▪ Onedrive ▪ Website 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ I don't Know (5) ▪ Apart from a website, newsletter software and facebook: a library management system ▪ irisbox, nova, accueil citoyen ▪ online licence application management platform ▪ platform for communicating and calculating climate targets ▪ sharepoint , onedrive, webbased applications , sharedservers , office 365 , etc ▪ Fluicity mobile. ▪ Website

Source: Own production

Table 6: Digital Departments
In which department is this digital system used?

Portugal	Belgium
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 6 All departments ▪ 2 I don't know ▪ Education ▪ Public Library ▪ Information Systems ▪ Municipal Archives and Department of Public and Private Works 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ I don't Know (5) ▪ In the whole of the public library ▪ population, demographics ,citizen servisse ▪ town planning ▪ Service Climat ▪ Urbanism ▪ Demographics ▪ The application is accessible to all services, citizens. ▪ all of them ▪ At term it will be all of them ▪ Public Works

Source: Own production

Table 7: Platform operation
Regarding digital technologies, how do the platforms of your municipality/entity work?

Portugal	Belgium
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Good (5) ▪ I don't Know (4) ▪ Through the institutional website, citizens can access online citizen support services ▪ They work internally, between the people who work in the organization and externally, with the various users, from schools, external entities and municipalities. ▪ They all work great, are intuitive and have widespread access. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ "I don't know" (9) ▪ Users can authenticate themselves via an ID card reader to obtain documents concerning them digitally, change their address or report errors in their file with the national registry. ▪ Interregional platforms with internet

Source: Own production

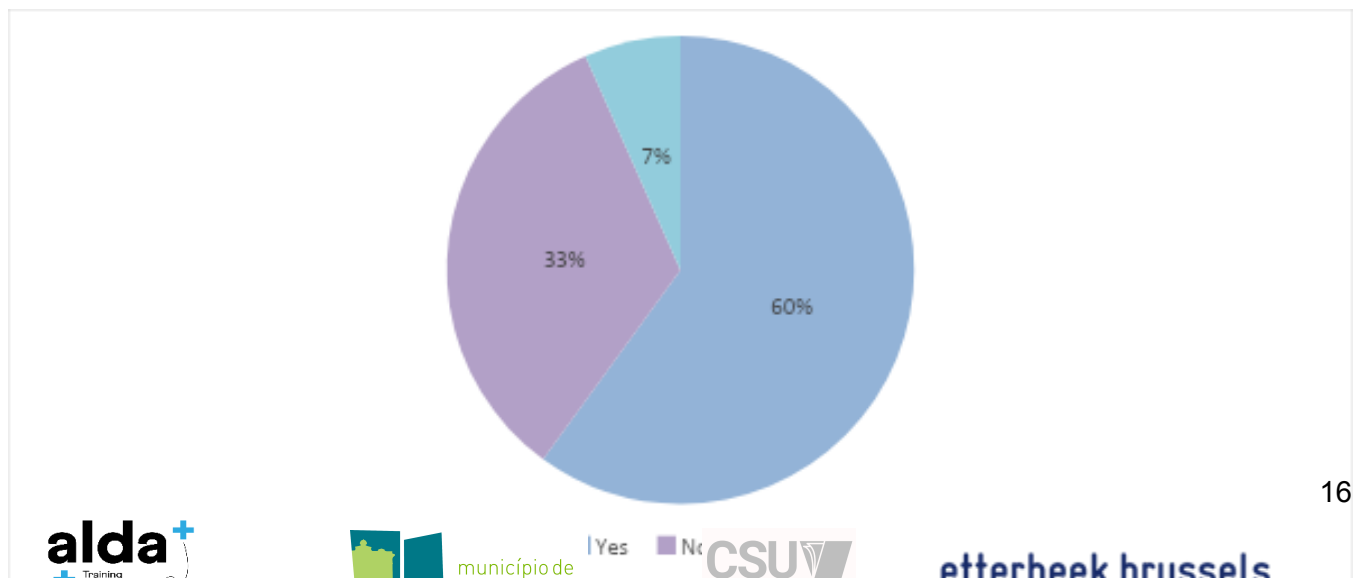
According to the experience of the participants when asking them if there are differences/inequalities according to the size or importance of authority:

Table 8: Differences/ inequalities

Portugal	Belgium
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 9 yes ▪ 5 No ▪ 1 Other 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 4 Yes ▪ 5 No ▪ 3 Other

Source: Own production

Graphic 1: Differences/challenges authority



Source: Own production

Table 9: Problems/challenges encountered by your organisation in this field.

Portugal	Belgium
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8 Financial Access 8 Lack Knowledge 2 No reply 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 Lack Knowledge 1 Staff availability 4 Financial Access 2 Digital gap Lack of personnel and time Changing mentalities

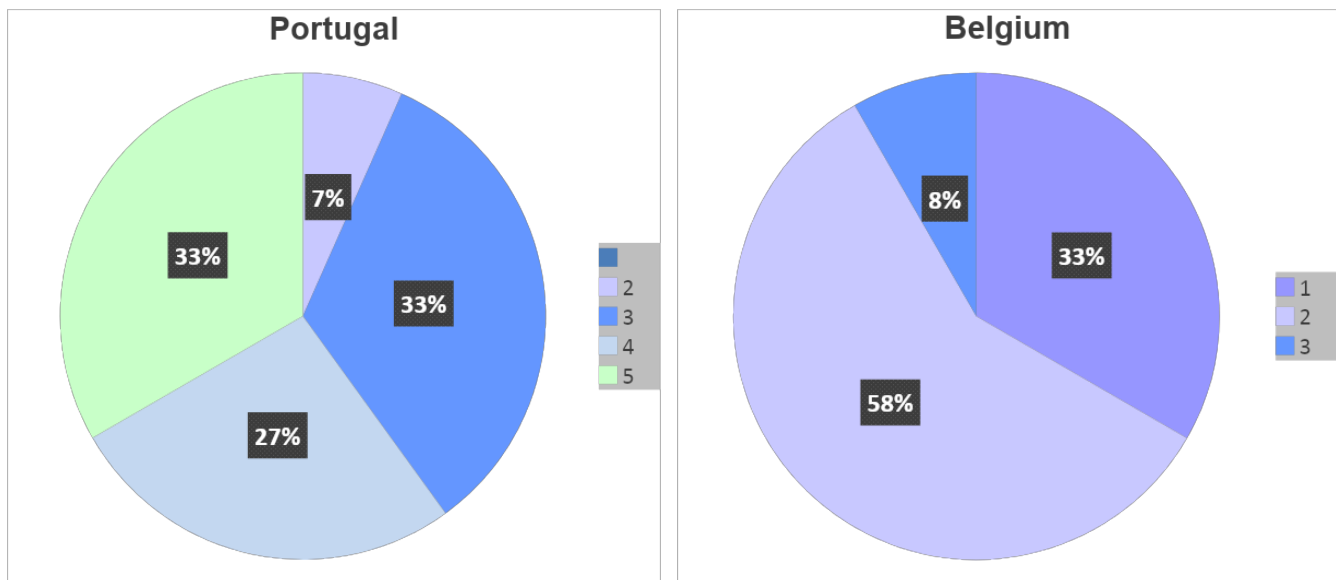
Source: Own production

METAVVERSE

On the metaverse, the sensitivity of the organisations where they work to new digital technologies in the field of virtual reality, augmented reality and the metaverse was analyzed. We considered this question according to a Likert scale, with a level of 1 to 5.

Graphic 2: New digital technologies and Metaverse

How sensitive is your entity with new digital technologies in the field of virtual reality, augmented reality and the metaverse?

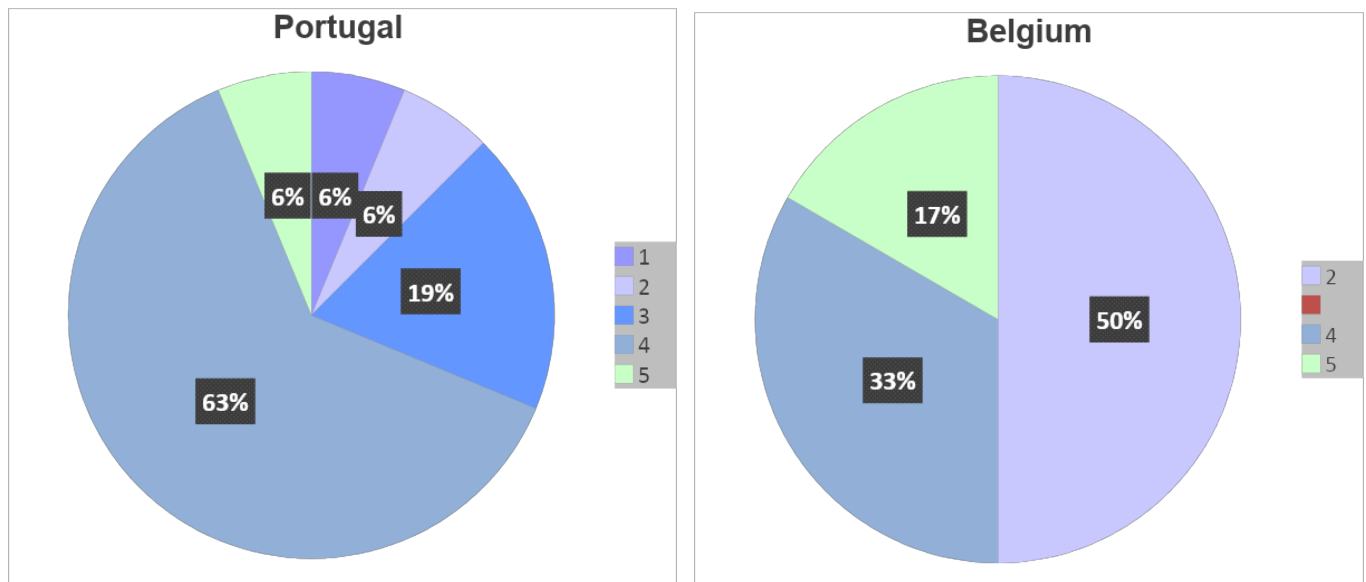


Source: Own production

3.3. Personal Knowledge and Inputs

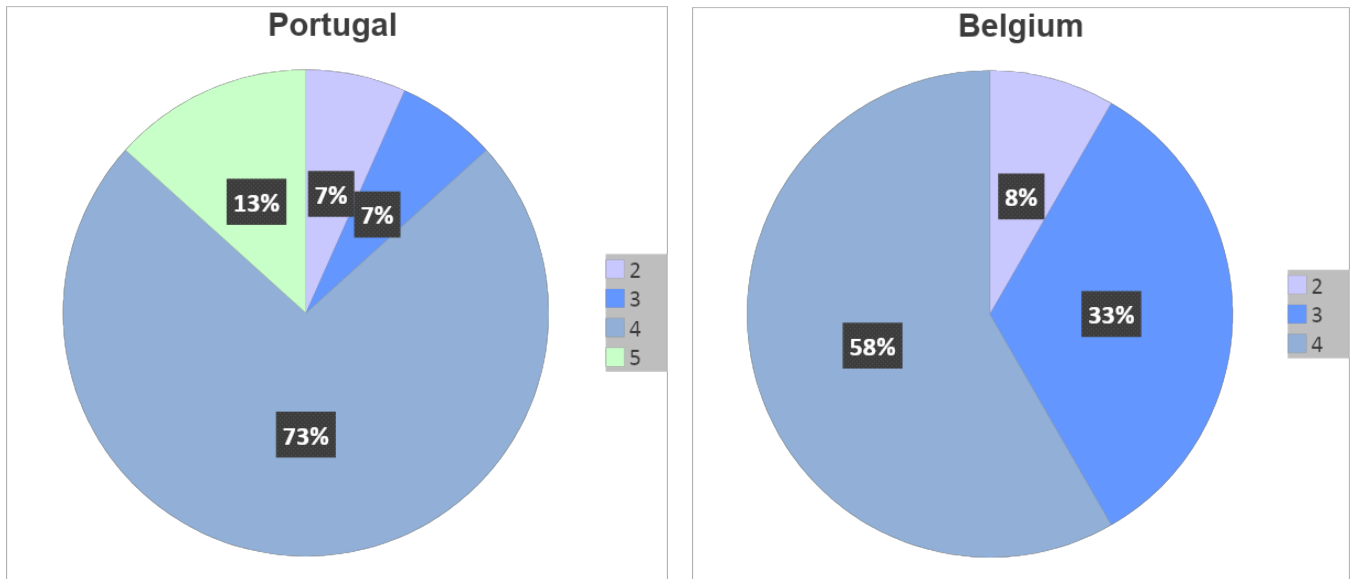
This part of the questionnaire sought to collect information on the accessibility of services to citizens, how they rate their knowledge of emersive technologies, the availability of this type of technology and the digital tools used by the organisation to interact with citizens. These questions followed the Likert scale model where one is very poor and 5 is excellent.

Graphic 3: Accessibility to digitalized public services
What do you think about the accessibility to digitalized public services for citizens?



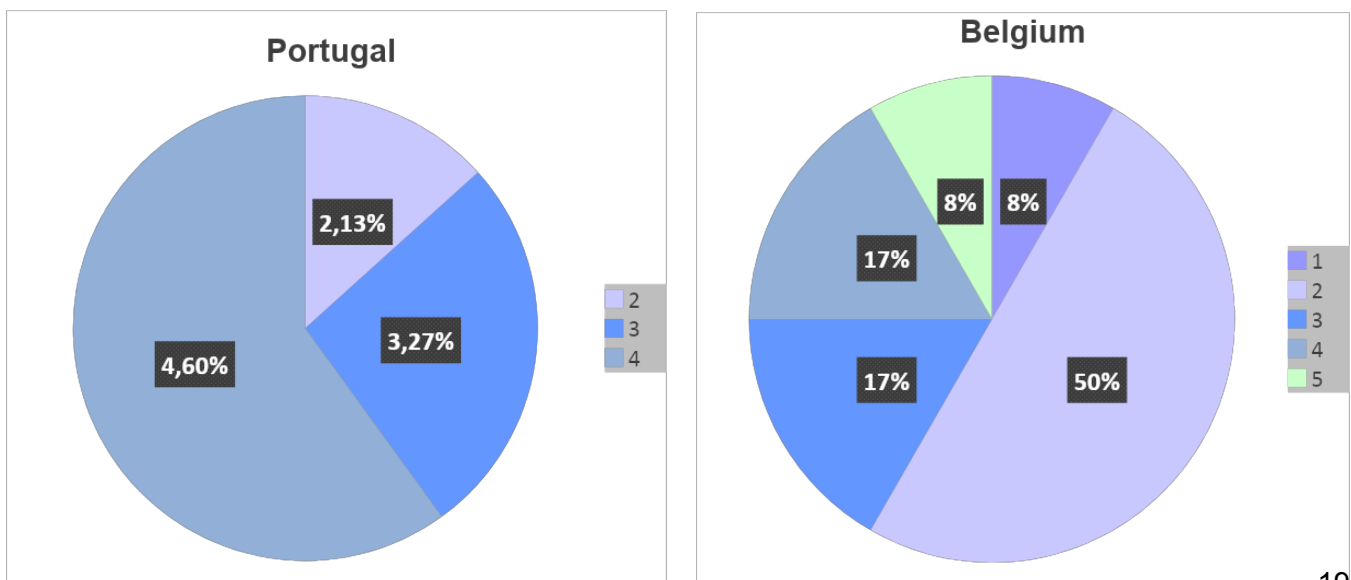
Source: Own production

Graphic 4: Assess your basic digital skills
How would you assess your basic digital skills?



Source: own production

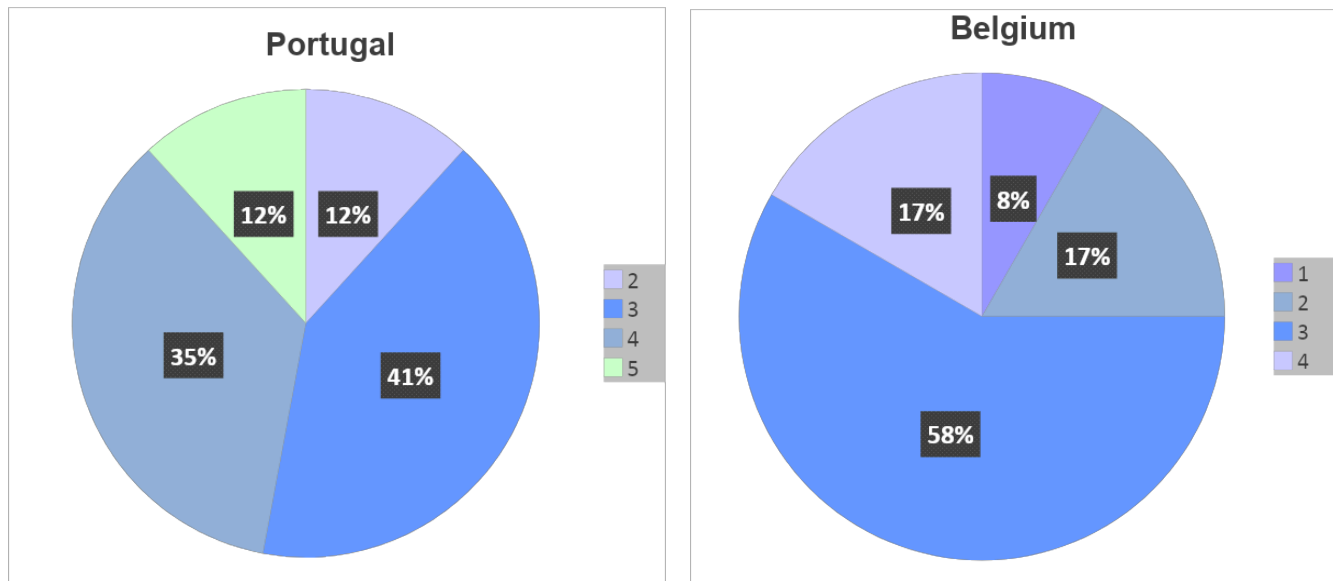
Graphic 5: Assess knowledge of immersive technologies
How would you assess your knowledge of immersive technologies?



Source: own production

Graphic 6: Technology availability and the digital tools used by your entity

How would you consider the technology availability and the digital tools used by your entity to interact with citizens?



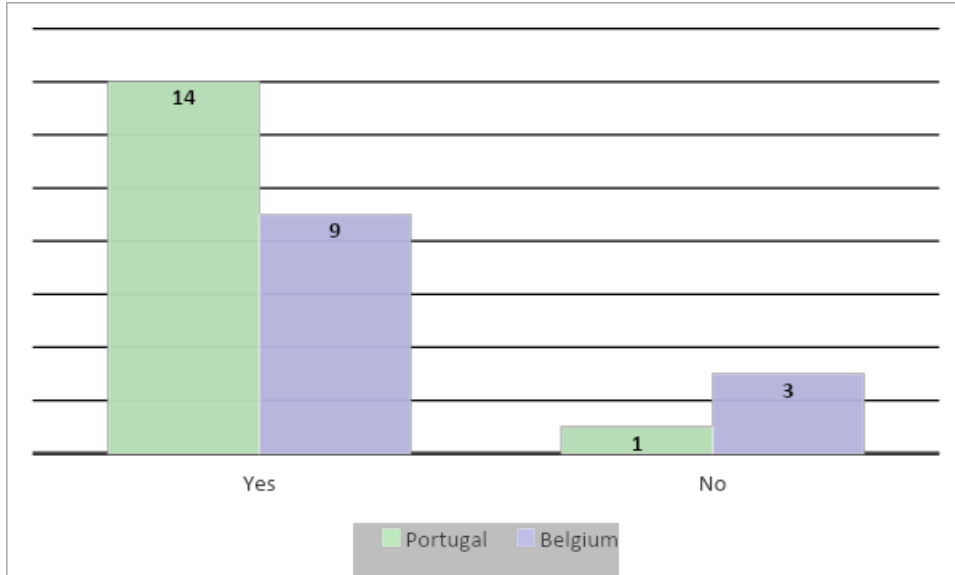
Source: own production

Table 10: Digital technologies to improve the accessibility of government services to citizens
How do you think we can use digital technologies to improve the accessibility of government services to citizens?

Portugal	Belgium
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Through portals, platforms ▪ Digital technologies are important for faster and more effective access to answers. ▪ Offering training to citizens, equipping them with the knowledge of how to take advantage of the tools available ▪ Increase of public access to information that is importante to de public ▪ Municipal services should educate the population and make it easier to access/avail services in digital format. In this way, people could solve many problems from home without having to miss work. ▪ To highlight problems ▪ create greater proximity and assist the target government in resolving matters ▪ By making digital tools more available to all citizens. ▪ More accessible, more information ▪ Making more services available online without having to travel would make it easier to access information. The same applies, for example, to the payment of overdue services (because currently, if you are late paying for water, you have to pay in person) ▪ Make it accessible ▪ Make it practical and accessible ▪ General affairs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ By presenting one accessible, simple, uniform and clear interface for all services offered. ▪ personalising information ▪ By facilitating administrative procedures and make project's presentation easier (infrastructures etc) ▪ Digital technologies offer many opportunities to improve the accessibility of public services to citizens. Here are just some of the ways in which they can be used to this end: Online portals and mobile applications: Governments can create user-friendly online portals and mobile applications that bring together a wide range of public services. This enables citizens to easily ▪ Accessibility is an important issue, and enabling access to this information at any time and in a variety of digital ways is essential. ▪ In terms of translation, explanations, interaction ▪ a "lot" of services are already available, but not a lot of people know about it . I'm guessing information campaigns through social media, local government internet sites,etc to make people more aware ▪ Provide data on public spaces and roads and public buildings on interactive maps.

Source: Own production

Graphic 7: Do you think it is possible to integrate new technologies with existing infrastructures and systems?



Source: own production

Table 11: Integrate new technologies with existing infrastructures and systems

Portugal	Belgium
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Nowadays it is essential to provide public services in digital terms, be it through invoicing. ▪ In order to integrate the new technologies into existing infrastructures and systems, it's enough to computerise the services. Using a digital mobile key, people can digitally sign documents and access ▪ The modernisation of infrastructures will be a fundamental way forward. ▪ New technologies demand good infrastructures. ▪ just provide more details to the online citizen support servisse ▪ Improving the services already available ▪ we already do. ▪ 5 participants No reply 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Technology is constantly improving ▪ You just have to move with the times. New technologies are an integral part of our present and, above all, our future. ▪ question is too vage, what new technologies do we talk about? ▪ pretty decent network coverage ▪ the public works department is gradually implementing a mapping project ▪ We would need RV tools ▪ on condition that it is monitored ▪ That's not how the interfaces are currently designed. ▪ Complexity will vary, but it should be possible to connect new interfaces to existing infrastructures and backends. When introducing new interfaces, special care should be given to maintain predictability, continuity and ease of appropriation of the interface: the interface itself

	<p>should not demand attention so that the user can fully focus on the task at hand.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 3 participants No reply
--	--

Source: Own production

Table 12: Contribute to reducing the digital divide and ensuring that all citizens have access to digital technologies and services

Portugal	Belgium
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ More training among colleagues ▪ Implement training actions ▪ provision of free medium-speed Wi-Fi servisse ▪ The municipality should ensure that, through the Parish Councils, everyone can access a computer with internet access to solve their problems. Parish councils should have trained staff available to support citizens/train them to access online services independently. ▪ More knowledge ▪ I think that citizens could have more support from the Parish Councils to learn how to work with online services or have access to them with specialized staff. ▪ Training people to help citizens access services ▪ IT investment ▪ Free access for all ▪ Invest in computer systems, increase training among technicians and workers in public bodies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Workshops for participation and facilitation of access to digital resources and cultural and educational activities. ▪ spending money on making the latest technologies /knowledge available for everyone ▪ have equipment for free public access at different points ▪ We need to offer a faster digital voice service that is less burdensome than the old system. ▪ Reducing the digital divide and ensuring that all citizens have access to digital technologies and services are key objectives for social and economic inclusion. Here are a few measures that can be taken to help achieve these objectives: Access to devices: Set up subsidy or loan programs to enable low-income individuals and families to acquire digital devices such as computers, tablets or smartphones. Digital training: Offer free or low-cost digital training programs to help citizens acquire basic computer, Internet and application skills. Libraries and community centers: Strengthen digital services in libraries and community centers by providing computers, Internet access and training resources. Education: Integrate digital education into school curricula from an early age to ensure that students develop essential digital skills. Local and relevant content: Encourage the creation of local and relevant digital content in different languages and dialects so that online services are accessible to all population groups. Digital accessibility: Ensure that websites, applications and online services are designed to be accessible to people with disabilities by following the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). Social inclusion programs: Set up

social inclusion programs for disadvantaged groups, including the elderly, people on low incomes and people living in rural areas, to help them access digital services. Public-private partnerships: Collaborate with the private sector to develop affordable and accessible technological solutions, including low-cost devices and Internet packages. Awareness: Raise citizens' awareness of the benefits of digital technologies and how they can improve their daily lives, including access to online public services. Data collection and monitoring: Regularly track the adoption of digital technologies and the digital divide using demographic data to adjust policies and initiatives accordingly. Bridging the digital divide is an ongoing effort that requires cooperation between governments, businesses, non-profit organizations and civil society. By working together, it is possible to ensure that no one is left behind in the digital age.

- by informing the public and offering training at attractive prices
- By supporting association that are already active in the sector and offering formation.
- by simplifying procedures and improving understanding (quality of communication) of digital platforms/websites/e-guichets. To make it simple and effective for everyone to use (without the need to download apps and other obstacles).
- training and information
- through multi-channel communications (social networks, website, newspapers, etc.). We would put explanatory video capsules, articles on new technologies, etc.
- With regard to public libraries, empowering them to help bridge the digital divide. With regard to interfaces, see the answer to question 22.

Source: Own production

Conclusion

The main objective of this study was to analyze municipalities and how they evaluate the use of digital innovation, reskilling and the metaverse. The resulting analysis aims to be more qualitative than quantitative, the questionnaire has been distributed in two municipalities, of different countries and, for this reason, it can only represent a sample of the full scenario.

27 professionals from 2 countries, Belgium and Portugal, responded to the survey. Out of this total, only 3 IT professionals participated, which can be classified as an under-representation of the sector. This is something that needs to be taken into account in this need analysis since these professionals answers have influence on the results of the study and then maybe we can shortly describe what is the influence of IT professionals on the questionnaire. This sample, in the case of Portugal, was made of employees of the municipality of Lousada and neighboring municipalities (with similar realities) and in the case of Belgium, it was made of employees belonging to the Commune of Etterbeek and the municipality of Brussels.

The study explored the impact of digital technologies in a number of ways.

In the digitalisation and participation framework, the use of digital tools and platforms by the municipalities were present in: scheduling of process meetings, online voting, such as Fluidity and the youth participatory budget, SIGA, platform for parents (booking school meals, transport), surveys (registering for activities promoted by the municipality), professional training, newsletter, Facebook, computerization of services such public tender (staff recruitment).

As for where the digital systems are used, there are various departments that use them, such as the education sector, the library, town planning, etc. For the most part, they answered in all municipal departments. As for how they work, it's through networking, for the most part between internal and external services and Users can authenticate themselves via an ID card reader to obtain documents concerning them digitally, change their address or report errors in their file with the national registry. About the biggest problems encountered are mostly financial problems, lack of knowledge, staff availability, technical expertise, the digital gap.

In addition, there are small differences between the countries in terms of the questions asked.

These differences will be taken into account when applying the tools according to each need in the local context. When asked about their own knowledge and contributions to the digital accessibility of services to citizens, for example, 63% said that digitized public services were good in Portugal, but only 33.3% of respondents in Belgium gave the same answer.

When respondents answered their own personal knowledge and inputs about the digital accessibility of services to citizens, 63% said that digitized public services were good in Portugal. In contrast, 50% of respondents in Belgium said that the service was not good.

When asked about their digital skills, the majority considered that they had good knowledge (73%) in Portugal and (58%) in Belgium.

In the case of knowledge of emerging technologies, in Portugal 60% say they know a lot. The same is not true in Belgium, where 50% have little knowledge.

Regarding the availability of digital technologies and tools used by their organization to interact with citizens, both countries answered in common that it is neither good nor bad, 41% for Portugal and 58% for Belgium.

When asked how to use digital technologies to improve the accessibility of public services to citizens, there were different answers, but most agreed that it would be through greater access to platforms and portals and mobile apps, interactive maps, offering training for professionals and more equipment in services (making digital tools more available to all).

It should be noted that 85.18% of respondents believe that new technologies can be integrated into existing infrastructures and systems.

In conclusion, it is possible to say that the majority of the participants believe that, in order to reduce the digital divide and to ensure that all citizens can have access to digital technologies and services, investment should be done. For them, it is important to have trained technicians, from municipalities and parish councils, to guide citizens in the use of online services, by simplifying procedures and improving understanding (quality of communication) of digital platforms/websites/electronic kiosks. The participants also talk about the importance of increase investment in IT

systems, providing free medium speed/ free Wi-Fi faster digital voice service. Reducing the digital divide and ensuring that all citizens have access to digital technologies and services are key objectives for social and economic inclusion. To achieve that, some measures can be taken, such as:

- **Access to devices:** Create subsidy or loan programs to enable low-income individuals and families to acquire digital devices such as computers, tablets or smartphones.
- **Digital training:** Offer free or low-cost digital training programs to help citizens acquire basic computer, internet and application skills.
- **Libraries and community centers:** Strengthen digital services in libraries and community centers by providing computers, Internet access and training resources.
- **Education:** Integrate digital education into school curriculum from an early age to ensure that students develop essential digital skills.
- **Local and relevant content:** Encourage the creation of local and relevant digital content in different languages and dialects, so that online services are accessible to all groups of the population.
- **Digital accessibility:** Ensure that websites, applications and online services are designed to be accessible to people with disabilities, following the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG).
- **Social inclusion programs:** Create social inclusion programs for disadvantaged groups, including the elderly, people on low incomes and people living in rural areas, to help them access digital services.
- **Public-private partnerships:** Collaborate with the private sector to develop accessible and affordable technological solutions, including low-cost Internet devices and packages.
- **Awareness raising:** Raising citizens' awareness of the benefits of digital technologies and how they can improve their daily lives, including access to online public services.
- **Data collection and monitoring:** Regularly track the adoption of digital technologies and the digital divide using demographic data to adjust policies and initiatives accordingly. Bridging the digital divide is an ongoing effort that requires cooperation between governments, businesses, non-profit organizations and civil society. By working together, it is possible to ensure that no one is left behind in the digital age.

Annex I – Questionnaire

LOCAL CONTEXT ANALYSIS AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT - MEDIUM QUESTIONNAIRE

[MEDIUM Questionnaire - Google Forms](#)

GENERAL INFORMATION:

- Name, Surname, email address
- Country where the local authority you represent is located
- City where the local authority you represent is located
- What is your position within this public authority?
- What type of public authority is it?
- What is the size of the authority (number of employees)?
- What is the size of the municipality / region where the authority is located?
-

About the topic:

✓ GENERAL QUESTIONS AND EXPERIENCE

- By using digital tools and platforms, which steps has your entity already taken to increase citizen participation and engagement in decision-making processes?
- As a Public Authority, what kind of digital system do you use as a digital tool?
- In which department is this digital system used?
- Regarding digital technologies, how do the platforms of your municipality/entity work?
- Are there any differences / inequalities depending on the size or the importance of the authority?
- What is the main problem / challenge for your entity in this field?

- How sensitive is your entity with new digital technologies in the field of virtual reality, augmented reality and the metaverse?

✓ PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE AND INPUTS

- What do you think about the accessibility to digitalized public services for citizens?
- How would you assess your basic digital skills?
- How would you assess your knowledge of immersive technologies?
- How would you consider the technology availability and the digital tools used by your entity to interact with citizens?
- How do you think we can use digital technologies to improve the accessibility of government services to citizens?
- Do you think it is possible to integrate new technologies with existing infrastructures and systems? Motivate your answer
- In your opinion, how could we contribute to reducing the digital divide and ensuring that all citizens have access to digital technologies and services?

