



Fit 4 DigiLinE

October 2021

TRANSNATIONAL REPORT about Digital Language Teaching

Motivations and limitations,
digital tools used and best practices
within language education

2020-1-AT01-KA204-078098

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Innovation Frontiers
Mind is the limit



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Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
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Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

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ABSTRACT

Implemented by a consortium of six partners from Austria, Italy, Greece, Finland, and Spain, the *Fit 4 Digital Linguistic Education* Erasmus+ project aims to create a European knowledge base of digital competences for language educators; to boost the use of digital tools for teaching purposes; and to extend the teaching skills and competences of language educators, with a particular focus on digital teaching, along with the social and personal skills that are also required. The project aims to initiate a broad debate on the importance of digital competences within language education, and to equip language educators with the supporting tools they need.

Since knowledge of the national language of the country in which people live and work is fundamental to professional success and integration into society, this project also represents a valuable contribution to “*extending and developing the competences of educators and other personnel who support adult learners*” in adult education.

The result of several research activities carried out between November 2020 and June 2021 this Transnational Report presents the **status quo of digital language teaching** and the **digital tools already in use** in Austria, Italy, Greece, Finland and Spain, together with a **collection of good practices** in the partner countries. In this initial phase, teachers, language educators and language school managers contributed directly to the research activities by participating in structured online surveys, semi-structured interviews, and focus groups. Additional desk research helped collect further examples of good practices.

1. INTRODUCTION

Language is seen as a gateway to the world, as an instrument for improving mutual understanding and exchange, and as a basis for communicating and living common values and views. Europe faces the challenge of having many different languages in a relatively small area, this can make mutual exchange, international cooperation, knowledge transfer and labour mobility more challenging.

On an individual level, a good knowledge of the local language is essential for social integration and survival in the job market. Successful asylum seekers and other immigrants need to be swiftly integrated into the local labour market, so that they can become full and valued members of the host society. Efforts in this direction are essential: in order to avoid overstressing national budgets on the one hand; and, on the other, so as to strengthen public perception of the migrant population as valuable members of society, thus helping to maintain social peace.

However, language learning is time- and cost-intensive, and requires a large amount of resources. New ways of teaching language skills are therefore needed. The digitalization of recent years has created opportunities to teach even complex content in online tools and courses, but teachers also need the corresponding skills in order to be able to use these efficiently in language teaching. This is precisely the focus of the Fit4DigiLinE project.

The *Fit 4 Digital Linguistic Education* project aims to 1) **create a European knowledge base of digital competence for language educators** and 2) provide the European adult educational landscape with a **newly developed online assessment tool**.

The partnership consists of six European organisations: two adult education centres (**bit schulungcenter GmbH** from **Austria** and **Työväen Akatemia** from **Finland**), one language school (**Babel Idiomas** from **Spain**), one innovative educational technology & research company (**Innovation Frontiers** from **Greece**), one private training agency and consultancy body (**EGInA Srl** from **Italy**) and one state-approved assessment centre and developer of languages tests (**ÖSD** from **Austria**).

Project partners have been cooperating since November 2020 to help boost the skills of language educators, with a particular focus on the specific digital, social and personal competences in which they should be proficient.

The main objectives of the project are the following:

- To increase competence in digital language education;
- To encourage the use of digital learning and assessment tools by language teachers;
- To create a European knowledge base of digital competences and useful tools for language teaching;

- To help develop the teaching skills and competences of language educators, with a particular focus on digital teaching and the social and personal skills that are required;
- To boost the employability and professional development of language educators in a digitalised world;
- To support the measurement of digital competence for the benefit of individual language teachers, and education providers.

The impact of Fit4DigiLinE will have the following effects on different sectors:

- an international cohort of language educators and other stakeholders who are better informed about the possibilities for digital teaching and assessment in their field;
- Greater awareness about the connection of digital competence with personal and social competences, and their importance in online language teaching;
- Language educators with improved competences and better employment prospects.

The project outputs to be achieved are as follows:

- IO1: a **transnational report** about the motivation and limitations for digital teaching of languages, digital tools used and good practices within language education;
- IO2: a new **e-learning course** with 8-10 training modules on personal, social and digital competences for teaching languages in a digital setting. Each module will also contain at least one video and one self-reflection assignment;
- IO3: an **online assessment tool** to enable language teachers to evaluate the knowledge and skills they have acquired in the fields of digital, personal and social competences;
- IO4: **Train-the-trainer-Guide** for the correct use of the assessment tool and the digital assessment of users' learning progress;
- IO5: a **MOOC Course**, containing six different course units related to digital, social and personal competence. It will be accessible for at least five years after the end of the project.

All project results will be made available for free through the project website, with materials also shared through social media channels. Videos will be shared via the official YouTube accounts and Facebook page.

Products and materials will be available in partner languages as well as in English; this will ensure that they are easily accessible and able to be used more widely, in both Europe and beyond.

This *Transnational Report about Digital Language Teaching* begins with a brief general introduction of the research activities, and a summary of the data collected. It then outlines the main aims and objectives of the research, focusing on the chosen methodological framework and the research tools. This theoretical background lays the foundation for the practical field research and other activities, consisting of the online

survey, the running of semi-structured interviews and focus groups, and the collection of good practices and useful resources.

To find out more and stay updated, visit:



Official project website: <https://www.fit4digiline.eu/>



Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/Fit4DigiLinE/>

1.1 General overview

Knowledge of foreign languages and cultures helps boost personal development and professional success. For those living and working in a foreign country in particular, knowledge of the local language can be essential for employment and integration into society more broadly.

The digitalization of recent years has created opportunities to teach even complex content in online courses, exploiting the wide variety of digital tools at our disposal. The COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent boost to online learning helped to provide a clear demonstration of the potential of digital learning.

With an emphasis on the importance of digital teaching and learning, the Fit4DigiLinE project is focused on helping language educators and schools to be better informed about the possibilities offered by digital teaching, as well as about useful digital tools and good practices currently in use.

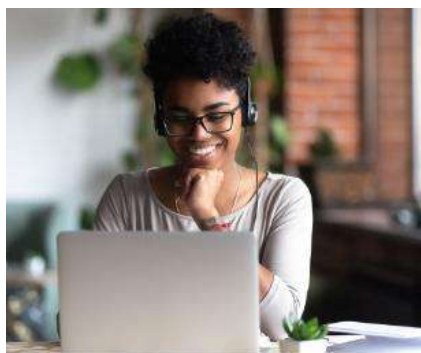
The first milestone to be reached in the project framework is the production of a transnational report on the motivation and/or limitations for digital teaching of languages. The report is based on an in-depth investigation into the opinions of teachers and experts, which provides an up-to-date and contextualised overview of the subject.

In this initial phase, more than **300 experts** - including teachers, language experts and managers in language schools - were directly involved in the research activities: through the implementation of structured surveys, semi-structured interviews, and focus groups. The results and insights of these activities allowed the creation of a transnational summary report, presenting the status quo of digital language teaching and the digital tools already in use, together with a collection of good practices in the various partner countries

The first engagement activity was the **delivery of the survey**, the results of which will guide the development of subsequent project activities. The survey analysed the opinions of language educators and managers about the needs and demands of language teaching, with a specific focus on the **digital, social and personal competences** that educators believe they need. The survey aimed to understand respondents' views on digital literacy, and the possible benefits that digital resources could bring to the teaching environment. Project partners also examined whether participants feel that technical and digital tools (such as online or device-based apps) might help when teaching a language, by, for example, making lessons more engaging and/or interactive for learners.

Participants were also asked to evaluate the level of expertise required in specific areas on the EU's DigComp (Digital Competence) scales, to see if there was a link between the level of language to be taught (mapped on the CEFR - Common European Framework of Reference for Languages,), and the digital skills needed to teach at that level.

From December 2020 until March 2021, two different surveys were sent out within and outside the partner countries; one targeted educators and language experts, and the other managers in language teaching organisations.



Questionnaire Results



91 %

said that Covid-19 has significantly contributed to the use of digital resources + tools in teaching foreign languages

The training modules declared most important:

- Promoting online learner interaction
- Ensuring accessibility for all learners
- Engaging learners online
- Self-care while teaching digitally

92 %

believe that digital skills of foreign language teachers need to be strengthened

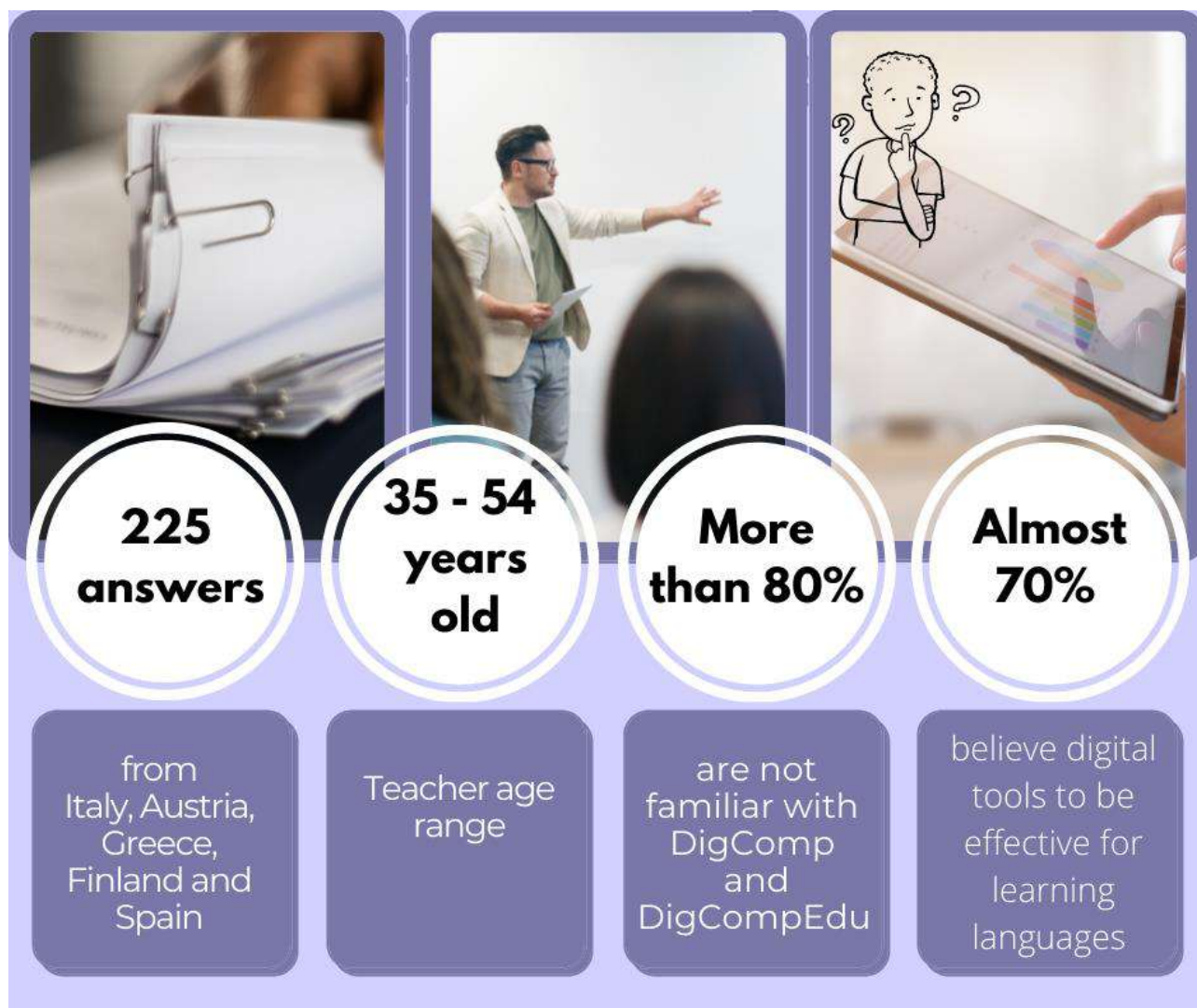
One in two respondents stated, that they have encountered difficulties/barriers in using digital tools and resources during their teaching sessions

95 %

think, that audio and video resources (f.ex. Podcasts, YouTube, Ted Talks,..) are useful for teaching.

The benefits of using digital tools/technologies declared most important:

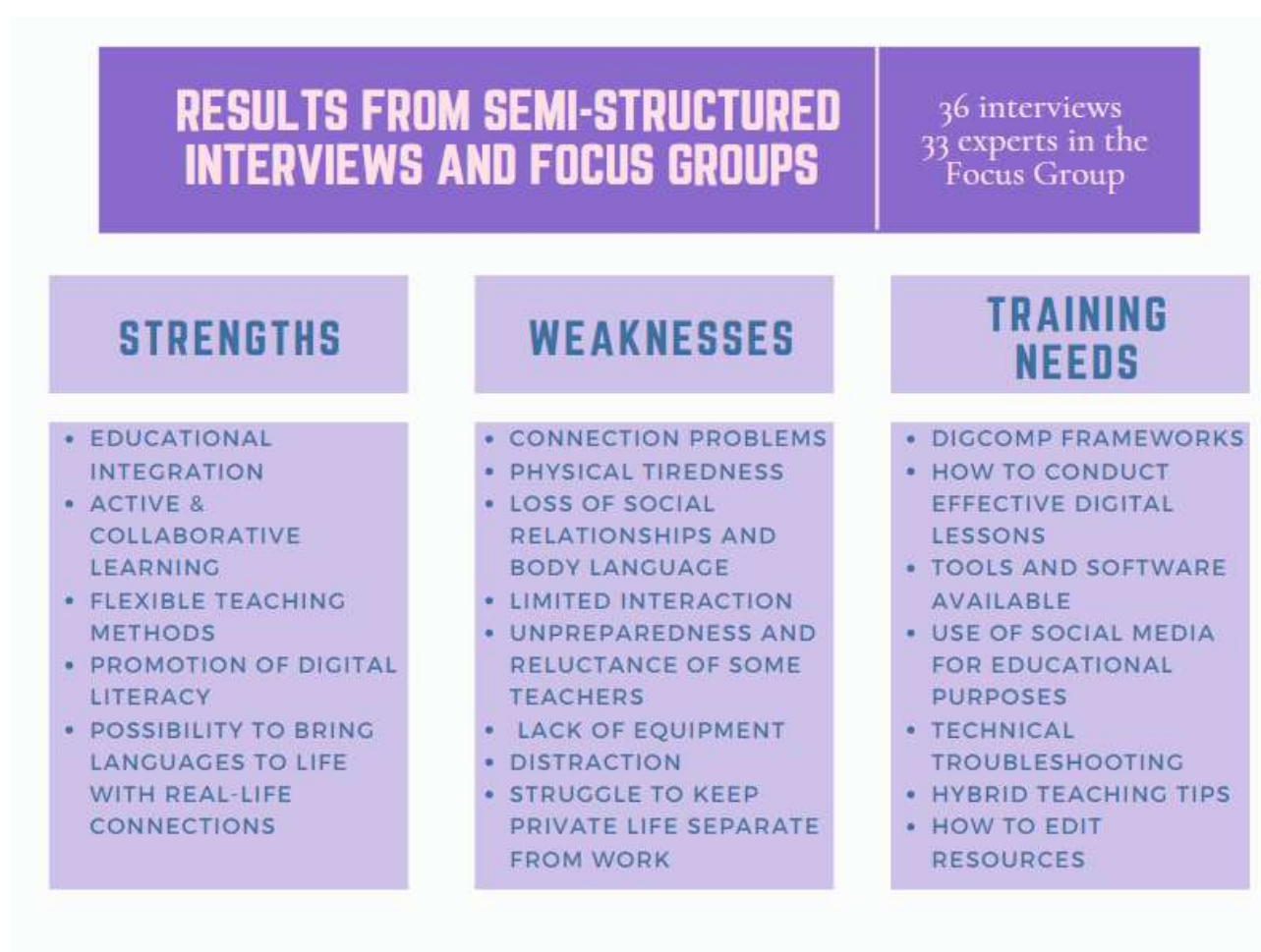
- Teaching learners how to use digital technologies safely and responsibly
- Using tools to enable students to participate actively
- Developing personal & digital skills + competencies for teaching purposes



After the collection and in-depth analysis of **276 responses (225 educators and 51 managers)**, partners proceeded to conduct preliminary semi-structured interviews, which were then followed by a series of focus groups in April and May 2021. The **36 preliminary interviews** took place either face-to-face, by telephone or online, and allowed the gathering of valuable insights which were then explored further during the focus groups. A total of **33 language educators and managers** participated in the **online focus group discussions**, giving their views on digital language education in general and sharing their own experience of good practice examples.

A **Focus Group Interview Guide** was compiled in English, containing open questions and instructions for moderators on how to conduct focus groups; this was then translated into the partner languages and made available as a resource for language schools.

After careful analysis of all the research results, project partners drew up a **catalogue of requirements** which summarised the perceived needs of language educators and managerial bodies in the respondent countries.



On the basis of the information gathered in the first research phase, the consortium also produced a collection containing **21 examples of good practices and useful resources**, a description of which can be found later on in this document.



COLLECTION OF

Good Practices and useful resources

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Babel World Tour
- Baamboozle
- Drive & Listen
- Gold Lotus
- Google Classroom
- Kahoot
- Learning Activity Management System
- Lyrics Training
- Lyrikline - Listen to the poet
- Norma's Teaching
- Online Books
- Padagogy Wheel
- Padlet
- Pixton
- Prezi
- Radio Garden
- Sanako Connect - Online Language Lab
- Ted Talks
- Vocaroo.com
- Wordwall
- Zoom



2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

With a target sample of 250-300 language teachers, experts and managers, the methodology chosen to collect the information followed a qualitative and quantitative approach, and was based on:

- Structured surveys;
- Semi-structured interviews;
- Focus groups;
- Literature research and collection of good practices.

Partners agreed to involve:

- at least 50 people per country submit the survey
- 5 - 7 people per country for the semi-structured interviews
- 5 - 7 people per country involved in the Focus Groups



The target groups the partners are interested in involving are composed of:



Through the quantitative approach, the consortium gathered a significant amount of comparable data that was analysed by country and on a general and collective basis. Based on the information collected, partners built illustrative graphics and tables to show the noted patterns and averages; this enabled them to investigate the initial status quo of digital language teaching in more detail.

The qualitative method offers, on the other hand, a much more detailed analysis of the object of the research, and allows a much more informed overview of the topic.

Through the running of semi-structured interviews and focus groups, the main goal was to collect additional insights and information from the people directly involved in the field of interest, and to improve knowledge about the status quo of digital language teaching. In addition, the aim was to collect information about digital tools and good practices in use in the partner countries, and to make this available to other language organisations.

On September 2020, the European Commission published the [Digital Education Action Plan](#)¹ (DEAP 2021-2027), highlighting its vision "for high-quality, inclusive and accessible digital education in Europe". Encouraging stronger cooperation between member states at European level, the Commission wished to "learn from the COVID-19 crisis, during which technology is being used at an unprecedented scale in education and training and to make education and training systems fit for the digital age".

The Fit4DigiLinE partnership is eager to make its concrete contribution within this field by enhancing the teaching and digital skills of language teachers and educators. In addition, the project is very much aligned to the two strategic priorities highlighted in the DEAP 2020, namely:

- Fostering the development of a high-performing digital education ecosystem;
- Enhancing digital skills and competence for the digital transformation

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-in-the-eu/digital-education-action-plan_en

The DEAP in a nutshell:



September 2020

The Digital Education Action Plan (2021-2027)
has **two strategic priorities**:



1

To foster a high-performing digital education ecosystem, we need:

- **infrastructure, connectivity and digital equipment**
- **effective digital capacity planning and development**, including effective and up-to-date organisational capabilities
- **digitally-competent and -confident educators and education & training staff**
- **high-quality content, user-friendly tools and secure platforms**, respecting privacy and ethical standards



2

To enhance digital skills and competences for the digital age:

- support **the provision of basic digital skills and competences** from an early age:
 - ▶ digital literacy, including management of information overload and recognising disinformation
 - ▶ computing education
 - ▶ good knowledge and understanding of data-intensive technologies, such as AI
- **boost advanced digital skills**: enhancing the number of digital specialists and of girls and women in digital studies and careers



- Launch a **Strategic dialogue with Member States** to facilitate successful digital education
- Make recommendations for **online/distance learning** in primary & secondary education
- Develop a **European Digital Education Content Framework** and check feasibility of a **European exchange platform** to share certified online resources and link existing platforms
- Launch a **Connectivity4Schools** initiative and encourage **Member States** uptake of EU support for broadband, internet access and digital tools like **SELFIE for Teachers**
- Develop **ethical guidelines on artificial intelligence (AI) and data usage** in teaching and learning and support-related research & innovation activities through Horizon Europe.

ACTIONS TO TAKE

- Develop **common guidelines to foster digital literacy and fight disinformation**
- Include AI and digital skills in the **European Digital Competence Framework**; support the development of **AI learning resources** for education & training providers
- Develop a **European Digital Skills Certificate** recognised by governments, employers and other stakeholders across Europe
- Make recommendations on **improving digital skills provision** and introduce an **EU target for student digital competence**
- Promote advanced digital skills development: scale up **Digital Opportunity traineeships** and encourage **female participation in STEM**

Education and
Training

If, in addition, we look at the overall digital performance and progress of EU countries concerning digital competitiveness, according to the [Digital Economy and Society Index²](#) (DESI 2020):

The current COVID-19 pandemic has shown how important digital assets have become to our economies and how basic and advanced digital skills sustain our economies and societies. Although already 85% of citizens used the internet in 2019, prior to the COVID-19 crisis, only 58% possessed at least basic digital skills.

The **Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI)** is a composite index published annually by the European Commission since 2014. It measures the progress made by EU Member States towards a digital economy and society, bringing together a set of relevant indicators. The DESI is composed of five principal policy areas, which group 37 indicators overall³:

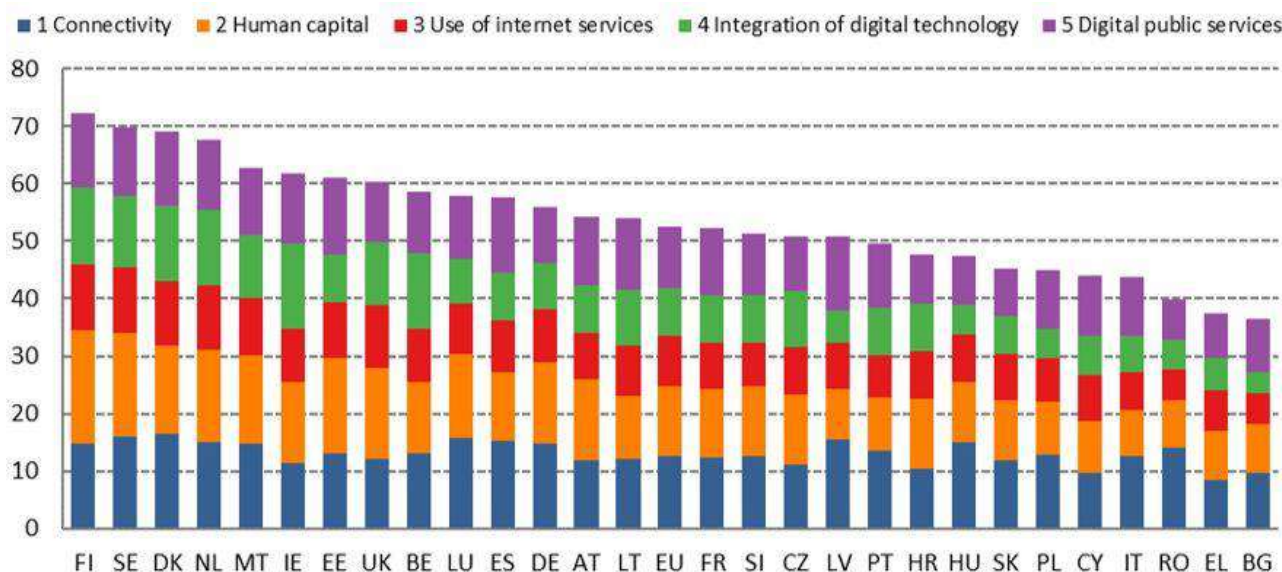
1 Connectivity	Fixed broadband take-up, fixed broadband coverage, mobile broadband and broadband prices
2 Human capital	Internet user skills and advanced skills
3 Use of internet	Citizens' use of internet services and online transactions
4 Integration of digital technology	Business digitisation and e-commerce
5 Digital public services	e-Government

Over the past year, all EU countries improved their digital performance. Finland, Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands scored the highest ratings in DESI 2020 and are among the global leaders in digitalisation. These countries are followed by Malta, Ireland and Estonia, while Bulgaria, Greece, Romania and Italy have the lowest scores on the index. Some other countries however still have a long way to go, and the EU as a whole needs improvement to be able to compete on the global stage.

The infographic below gives more detail of how EU countries perform in the different policy areas.

² <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/human-capital-and-digital-skills>

³ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/it/qanda_20_1022



The research conducted so far within the framework of Fit4DigiLinE also notes differences between countries in digital access and competencies in the field of language teaching.

With schools and training centres closed by the Covid-19 pandemic, teachers across Europe have had to adapt to the new circumstances, moving their teaching online and modifying materials and teaching practices to the new environment. This has proved easier for some than for others.

The field of language teaching has also been affected by travel restrictions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and by Brexit: both have limited the possibility of going to study languages in the country in which they are spoken.

Digitalisation in recent years has offered a solution to the issues mentioned above and has created new opportunities to organise language courses in a virtual environment. The delivery of online courses and Massive Online Open Courses (MOOCs) can also benefit migrants and asylum seekers who, when arriving in a foreign country, need to master the local language in order to find work and to become better integrated into the host society.

This is why one of the main objectives of the Fit4DigiLinE project is to increase competence in digital language education, boosting the use of digital tools and enhancing the skills of language trainers in the digital field.

3. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Digital transformation is reshaping the world and the society we live in. It has provided us with invaluable tools, and it has impacted our daily lives in a way that was unimaginable only 30 years ago. Digital technologies have become the centre of our social interactions, and a great part of our daily communication is mediated through a screen. Technological devices support our access to and exchange of information; they are a means of communication and collaboration; and they offer us new ways to work and to learn.

Like many other sectors, education and training are undergoing rapid change. Digital technologies offer many opportunities for teaching and learning. These include better opportunities for cooperation, interaction and communication; more personalisation and greater inclusion; increased learner engagement; and more flexibility, which offers the possibility to reach a whole new cohort of learners.

These new opportunities do come at a price, however. Educators and teachers must now build and strengthen a new set of digital skills; and these skills will need to be continuously updated as technology evolves. In addition, digital inputs must be balanced with other more traditional didactic instruments, in order to leave no one behind and to avoid the risks that come from digital exclusion or marginalisation.

As part of their professional competence, teachers now need to have the skills and abilities to use technological tools to conduct activities in their classrooms – whether online or in the real world - and the competence and capacity to integrate them into the teaching and learning processes. They must be able to solve educational problems by integrating information and communication technology (ICT) into their lessons. ICT can empower teachers: not only as support for their existing practices, but also as a means to transform them.

To establish a common framework for defining and describing the most important aspects of digital skills, the European Commission has developed three digital competence frameworks: DigComp, DigCompEdu and DigCompOrg.

3.1. DigComp

[DigComp](#) provides a dynamic definition of digital competence that is not focused on the use of a specific tool, but on the needs that each citizen has today: to be informed, to interact, to express themselves, to protect themselves, and to deal with problems related to technological tools and digital environments. This framework is thus relevant to all citizens.

The DigComp model offers a system for the development of the digital competence of citizens, with granular and detailed indications regarding individual competences that together form the overall scheme of digital competence. The structure of the framework is modular, so it can be read and presented in different formats.

The complete model comprises **five areas of digital competence**, twenty-one different specific competence, with eight levels for each. The **five areas** can be summarised as follows:



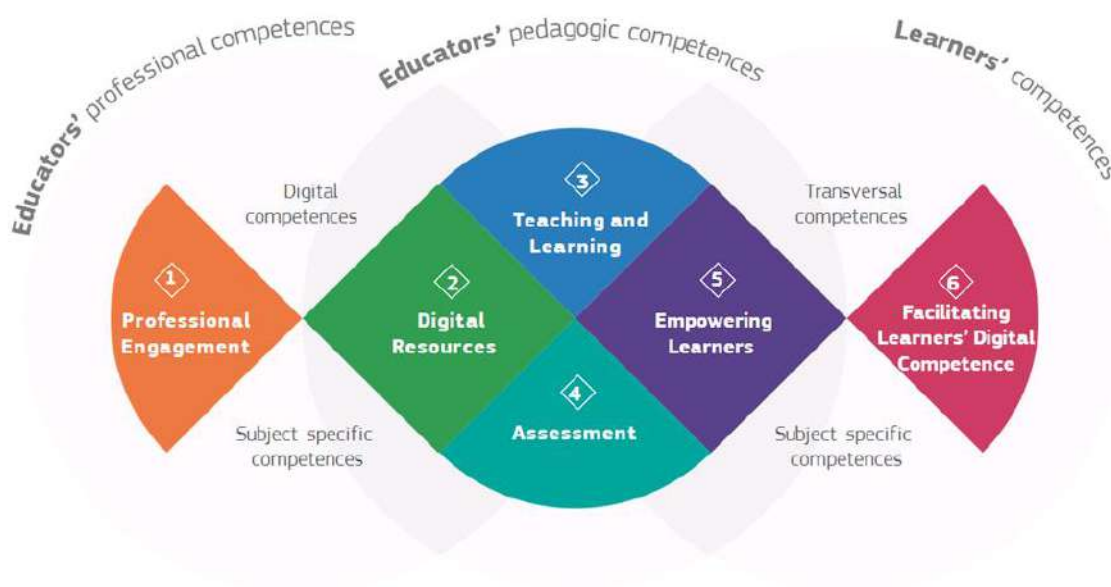
4

3.2. DigCompEdu

[DigCompEdu](#), has some areas of overlap with DigComp, but is different from the latter because it is addressed explicitly to educators and teachers. While DigComp focuses on the mastery of digital technologies in general, educators and teachers need to master a more focused and specific set of digital skills in order to deal with the challenges their work offers. The two frameworks should, therefore, be viewed as complementary to one another and not a substitute.

The structure of DigCompEdu is similar to that of DigiComp, but focuses more on the digital competences required by educators in particular. The model is built around six broad areas of digital competence, with twenty-two specific competences and six levels along which educators' digital skills typically develop.

⁴ <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&furtherPubs=yes&langId=en&pubId=8203>



5

For this project, the most crucial area is undoubtedly number 3, *teaching and learning*, where at 3.1 a definition of *Digital skill for teaching*⁶ is given:

To plan for and implement digital devices and resources into the teaching process, so as to enhance the effectiveness of teaching interventions. To appropriately manage and orchestrate digital teaching interventions. To experiment with and develop new formats and pedagogical methods for instruction.

It is clear that educators need to become familiar with digital technologies - and especially digital technologies for teaching - and to understand how best to use them if they are to fully answer the challenges they face in a new era.

3.3. DigCompOrg

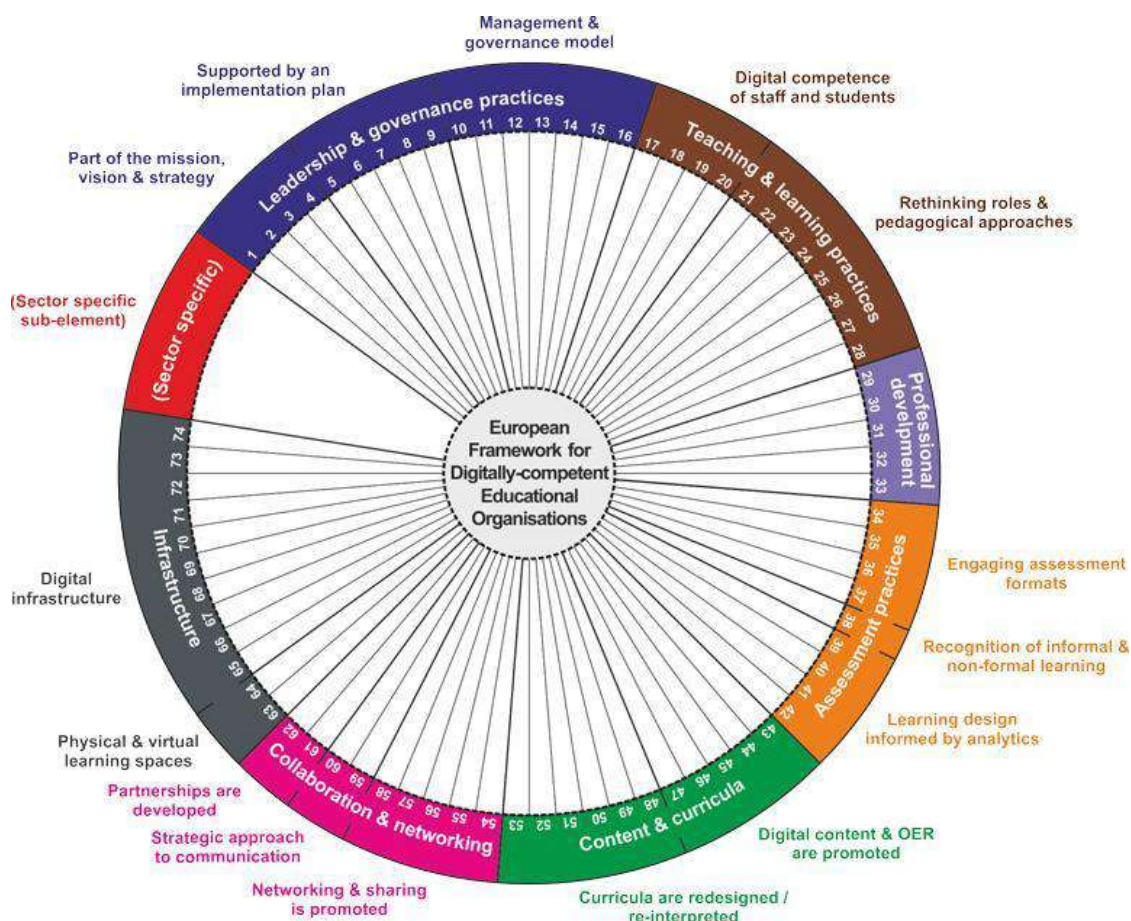
In addition to improved digital skills for citizens, and digital skills for educators in particular, educational technologies offer organisations in the field the opportunity to fulfil their mission and realise their vision of quality education. However, the integration of digital technologies will require a substantial organisational change within educational organisations.⁷

⁵ <https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/digcompedu>

⁶ Redecker, C. (2017). *DigCompEdu: European framework for the digital competence of educators* (JRC107466) [EUR - Scientific and Technical Research Reports]. Publications Office of the European Union. <https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/111111111/49809>

⁷ <https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/digcomporg/framework>

The [DigCompOrg framework](#) offers a comprehensive conceptual framework to reflect all aspects of the process of the systemic integration of technologies into all areas in which educational organisations operate. The main aims of DigCompOrg are to encourage self-reflection and self-assessment within educational organisations and to enable policymakers to plan, implement and evaluate initiatives, projects and interventions to integrate educational technologies into education and training systems.



3.4. DigComp frameworks within the Fit4DigiLinE research

The objectives of the Fit4DigiLinE research are framed by the various DigComp standards. It aims to investigate the relationship between language educators and digital technologies, as well as to explore the European knowledge base of digital competence, and the adult educational landscape. Drawing from the common European frameworks, the research explores competence in digital language education, and the use of digital learning and assessment tools by language teachers. Its results will lay the foundation for future project activities; developing a Europe-wide knowledge base of digital competence connected to personal and social competence; ensuring the employability and further development of language educators in the digitalised world; and supporting the measurement of this competence for individuals as well as for education providers.

The following section of this document presents the research methods and tools in more detail.

4. RESEARCH TOOLS and SAMPLE SELECTION

The research tools used in the first phase of the Fit4DigiLinE project were **structured surveys, semi-structured interviews, focus groups, literature research and collection of good practices**. The results of the surveys and interviews were used as an input for the focus groups which were held in the second phase of the research.

The COVID-19 pandemic forced changes to some of the methods initially planned to conduct the research. With face-to-face meetings largely forbidden, the surveys, semi-structured interviews and focus groups were carried out primarily through online tools, including JotForm, Google Meet, Zoom, Skype, and GoToMeeting.

Those sampled in the research included language teachers, staff members in language schools, researchers active in the field, and managers of organisations involved in language teaching. These target groups will be both contributors to and beneficiaries of the project; not only will they be actively involved in developing teacher training and in contributing to toolkit contents and tools definition, but they will also be able to make use of the final products.

Through their input into the research, participating educators, teachers and managers have helped to create this summary report, which - together with the other initial activities of literature research and good practices collection—will serve as a basis for the subsequent outputs of the project.

Partners tried to ensure heterogeneity of their samples by following these selection criteria as far as possible:

- **Age:** participants represent different generations and include at least one digital native;
- **Geographical spread:** respondents are from different areas of the country and work in various settings (e.g. urban, rural, etc.);
- **Gender:** participants are roughly equally split gender-wise;
- **Disability:** if possible, each partner surveys at least one participant with a disability;
- **Educational background:** participants have different levels of digital skills;
- **Role:** participants have different roles within educational institutions (e.g. teachers, trainers, staff, researchers, owner of language schools, managers, etc.).

4.1. Structured surveys

Surveys are one of the most reliable investigation tools in social science, providing a valuable instrument for measurements, and the establishment of a benchmark from which we can compare results over time. The goal of the Fit4DigiLinE surveys was to understand: the extent of the use of digital technologies in language teaching; the tools that are used, how they are used and at what level; and the intrinsic motivation that educators have to use them. The surveys also investigated whether the Covid-19 pandemic has changed the attitudes of

teachers towards digital teaching and the use of digital tools, and whether certain institutions (e.g. universities, schools, other educational institutions) have been more receptive to these changes.

Two tailor-made surveys were developed, translated, and distributed: one to teachers and trainers, and another to collect the views of heads of language schools, managerial bodies and school principals. One of the aims of the surveys was to compare the attitudes and needs of employers, to see how they closely they match those of the teachers and trainers that they employ.

4.1.1. Methodological approach

There are two different surveys (Annex 1): one for teachers and trainers, and one for managerial bodies. The surveys comprise 35-38 questions, formulated and selected by a pool of researchers according to data collected during the needs analysis phase. To boost the research outcomes, optional open-ended questions were also included.

The surveys were built following the structure used by other agencies to analyse educational institutions (e.g. Eurydice network, Statistical Office of the European Communities, European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, Centre for Research on Lifelong Learning, European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education); this should permit results comparison and repeatability for future research purposes.

Surveys were translated by the partners and distributed through the JotForm platform (<https://eu.jotform.com/>). Survey recipients could select their preferred language directly within the survey. Participants' data privacy is guaranteed in compliance with the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The JotForm platform was chosen because of its compliance with GDPR⁸, and all data collected during the completion phase (e.g. email address, IP address, and other personally identifiable information) are processed by and under the responsibility of JotForm Co.

In line with the objectives specified in the project, the structured surveys aimed to identify values and beliefs about digital technologies in language teaching and the skills required, from the point of view of as many actors in the field as possible; these included language teachers and trainers, staff in language schools, adult education providers with a focus on language education, researchers, those working in the general educational sectors, owner of language schools and managers at various levels. Each partner collected a minimum of 50 responses to the structured surveys by selecting participants with heterogeneous profiles.

4.1.2. Results

The results of the in-depth analysis of the responses of the teacher and manager surveys are set out below.

⁸ <https://www.jotform.com/gdpr-compliance/>

TEACHERS' VOICE

This synthetic report summarises the opinions of foreign language teachers about the use of digital tools and resources. The online survey collected 225 answers from those who work in the partner countries: Austria, Finland, Greece, Italy, and Spain (Figure 1).

More than half of our respondents are between 35 - 54 years old (Figure 2). They are teachers and trainers, but some of them also have other roles in the teaching of foreign languages, such as linguistic expert, researcher, or socio-cultural mediator (Figure 3). They work at different levels of education, and with students of different ages (Figure 4). The organisations they work for are predominantly public (63% - Figure 5). Among our interviewees there are both "veterans" and "novices" in teaching (Figure 6.) Although not entirely representative, this is nonetheless a relevant sample.

As for the results of the survey: most of our respondents (more than 80%) admit that they do not know about the European digital skills DigComp and DigCompEdu framework (Figure 7). They do nonetheless rate themselves as relatively competent according to the frameworks, mostly considering themselves as "Independent Users (B1 – able to use and experiment with digital tools for a range of purposes, trying to understand which digital strategies work best in which contexts) and "Independent User (B2 – able to use a range of digital tools confidently, creatively and critically to enhance their professional activities). They continuously expand their repertoire of practices (Figure 8).

Interest in the Fit4DigiLinE project is high: almost 90% of the respondents believe it to be interesting (Figure 9), and 43% would like to receive information and/or participate in the planned activities (Figure 10).

92% of the respondents believe that the digital skills of foreign language teachers need to be strengthened (Figure 11) and that the use of digital tools can make the study of foreign language more interesting for learners (almost 70% - Figure 12). Many feel that students' approach to the use of digital tools can vary according to their age, level of education and socio-economic status. (Figure 13).

Analysis of the open responses given in this section shows that teachers believe that learners' age can have an effect on their digital skills, while their level of education can also have an impact on their motivation as well. Socio-economic status affects the possibility of having access to appropriate digital equipment ("the disadvantaged social and economic condition of some families does not allow them to have at home the necessary means to constantly use digital tools; those tools that are now an integral part of the foreign languages teaching"; "it emphasizes disparities and inequalities in terms of connection, availability of devices etc"). Gender and country of origin do not seem to be variables that affect the learning of foreign languages through digital tools.

Our sample of respondents is equally divided in their answers to the question "In the facility/school where you work, have you ever encountered difficulties/barriers in using digital tools and resources during your lessons?"

(Figure 14). The reasons given for these difficulties include a lack of professional skills, lack of suitable equipment or an adequate internet connection.

What are the digital tools most used by our interlocutors in teaching foreign languages? Among the possible responses, the following emerge as the most commonly used: PowerPoint presentations, video and/or audio materials, online learning environments (e.g. Moodle, Google Classroom), and applications and virtual games (Figure 15).

As regards teacher knowledge of some useful applications for teaching foreign languages, Babbel and Duolingo stand out among those suggested in the survey (Figure 16). Some teachers also use other applications. Half of the sample believes that the use of these tools is useful. Those who responded "I don't know" to this question clearly express their "lack of knowledge" about the potential for using the applications suggested. (Figure 17). Use of the applications is still limited (Figure 18) and their use in the future remains uncertain, with many teachers responding "I don't know" when asked about their plans (Figure 19).

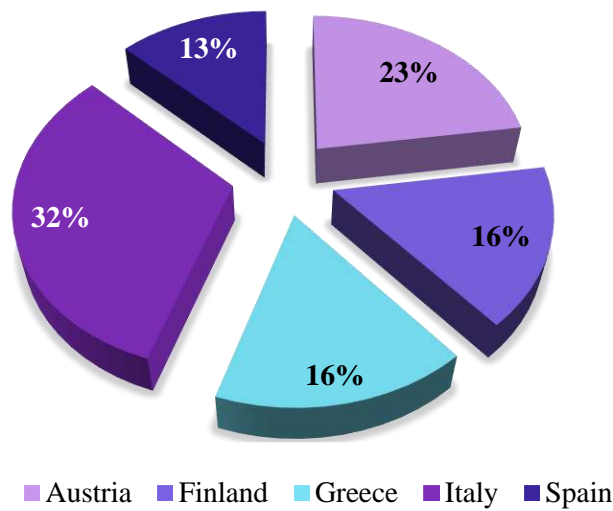
YouTube, podcasts, and media portals are the most known audio and/or video resources (Figure 20). These tools are considered extremely useful (Figure 21) and are often used in language teaching (Figure 22).

Digital technologies are now regarded as vital tools in language teaching. When participants were asked to rank the usefulness of digital technologies in six areas of language teaching (professional engagement and skills enhancement; creation and management of resources; teaching and learning practices; assessment; learner empowerment; and the development of students' digital skills), the average values given in all six areas were 4 or more, on a scale of 1=not at all important to 5=very important (Table 1).

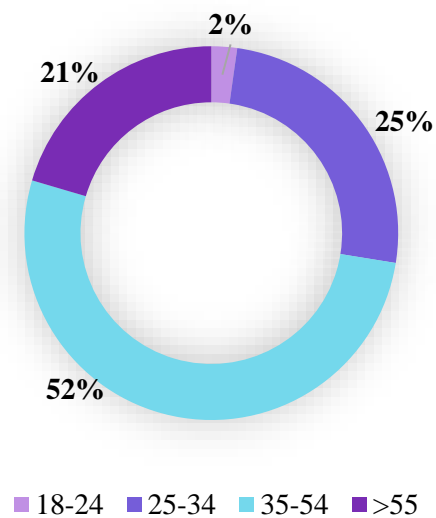
The vast majority of respondents (91%) believe that the Covid-19 pandemic has led to an increase in the use of digital resources and tools in language teaching. (Figure 23). The reasons given for this "pandemic push" are many but revolve around the lack of face-to-face lessons, the need to adapt to a new way of teaching ("We had to learn a lot in a short time, it was a challenge that changed our teaching methods"), and the wish to keep interacting with and involving students: "Digital resources have become essential to stimulate children and lead to more interesting lessons". It also accelerated the process of updating school institutions about the use of technology, and encouraging teachers to put in place new skills: "It was necessary to force and speed up multimedia tools and the use of more suitable teaching tools"; "we have been released from the bond of the textbook", and so on.

Our interlocutors were offered a list of hypothetical training modules to be developed during the Fit4DigiLinE project. All the proposed modules were given a high average score of appreciation (Figure 24). It is however clear that promoting learner interaction and engagement, ensuring accessibility and inclusion, and self-care while teaching/learning online are three areas that cannot be overlooked in a future training course for those involved in language education.

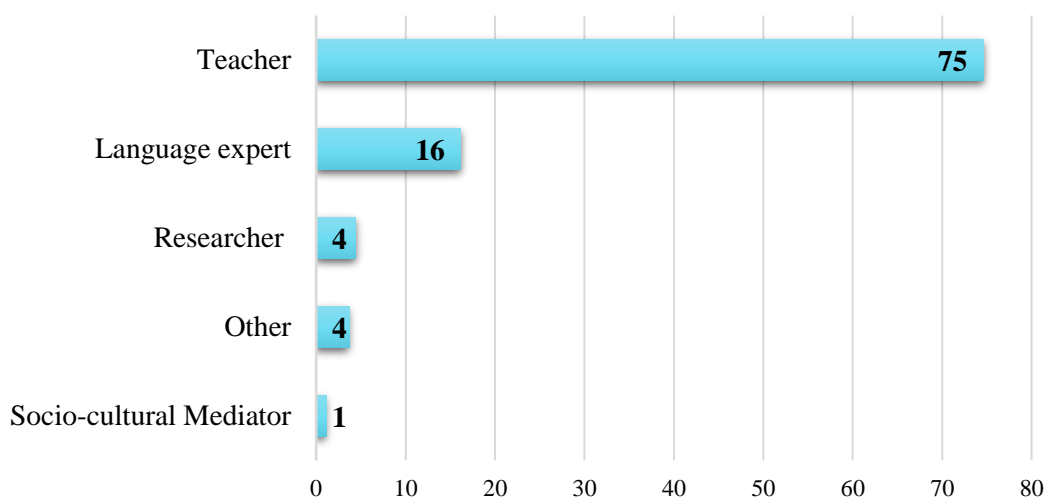
Teacher responses by country ($n=225$)



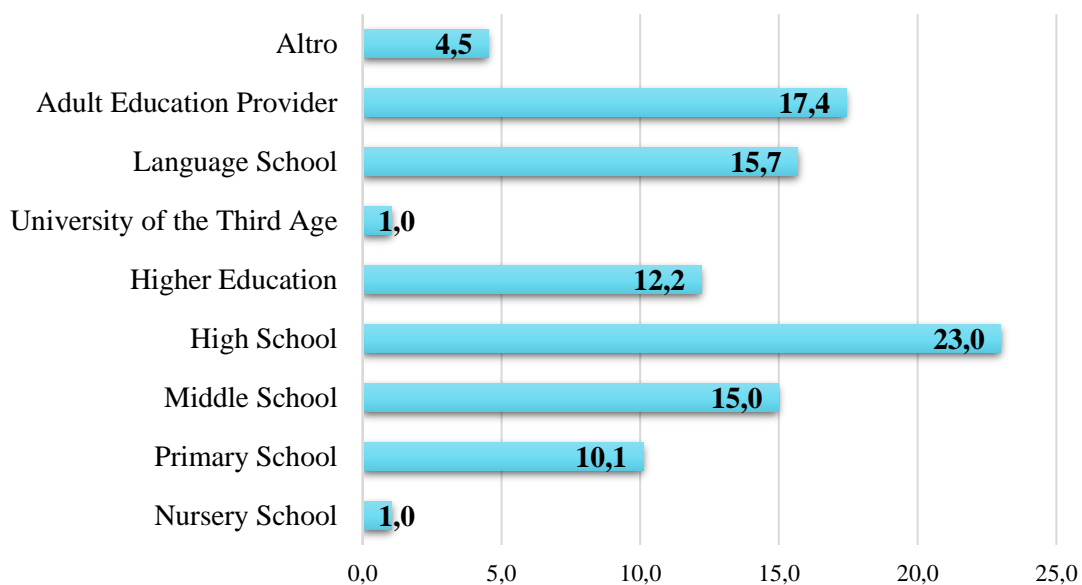
Age of respondents



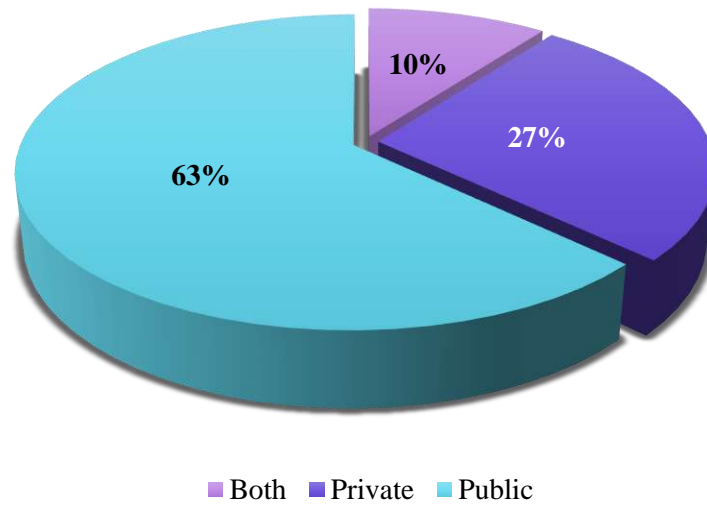
Role of respondents (% value - $n=272$)



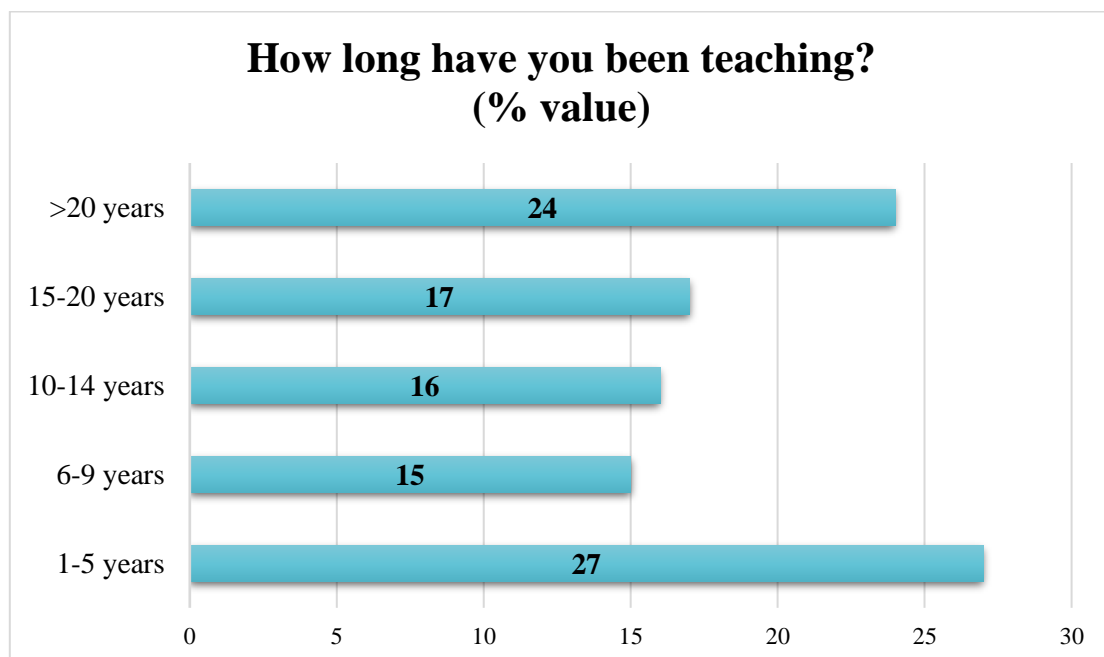
Where do you teach? (% value - $n=287$)



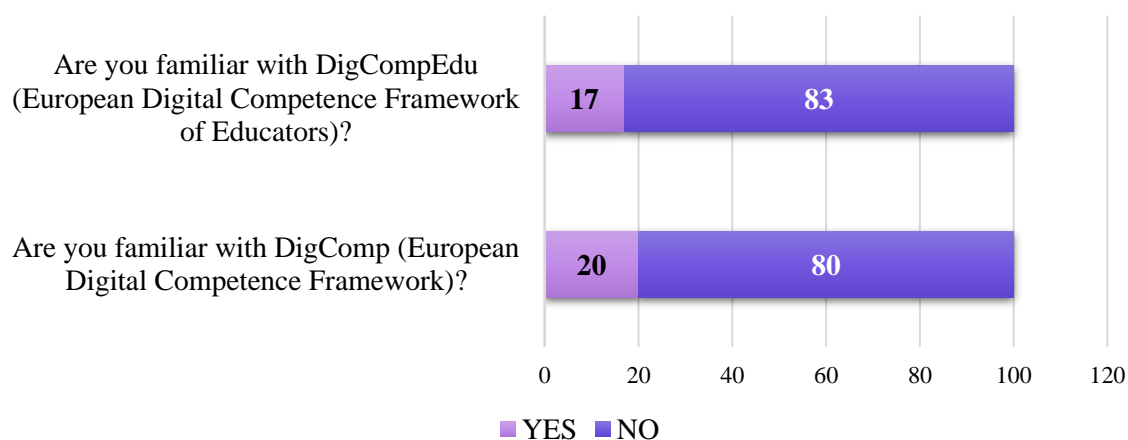
Do you work for a public or private institution? (% value)



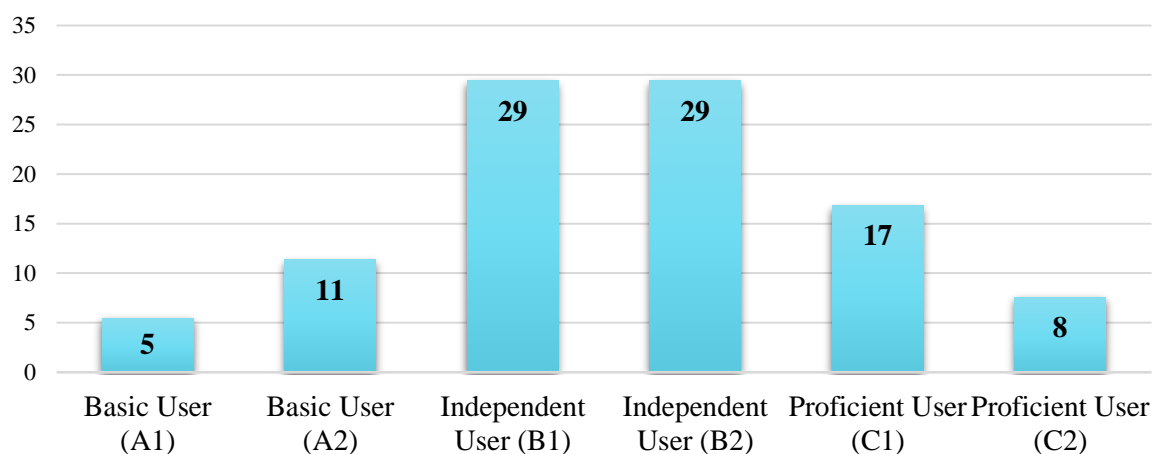
How long have you been teaching? (% value)



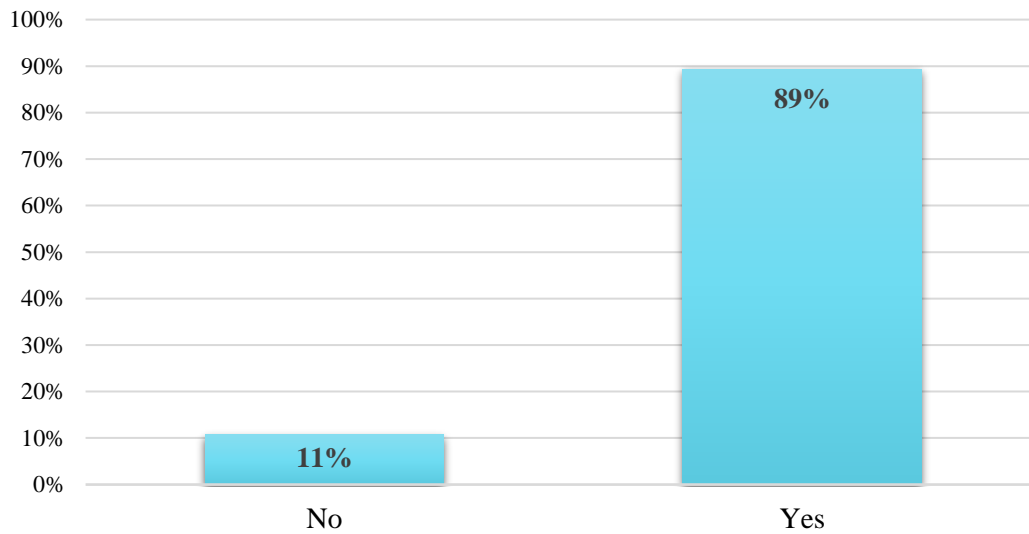
Familiarity with DigComp and DigCompEdu (% value)



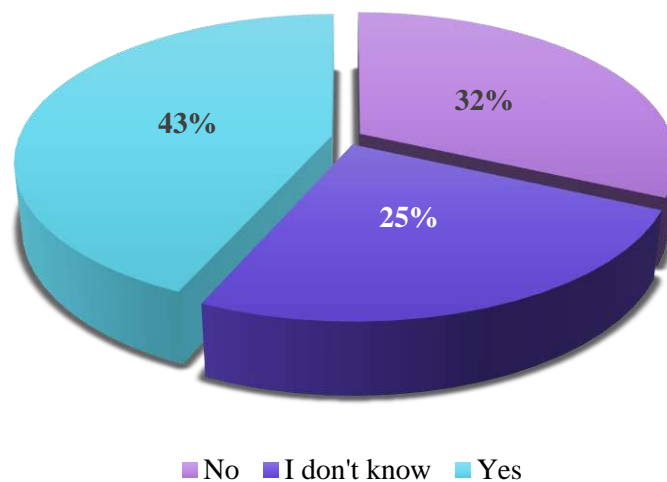
Based on the levels provided by DigCompEdu, how would you rate yourself - (from A1 to C2) - (% value)



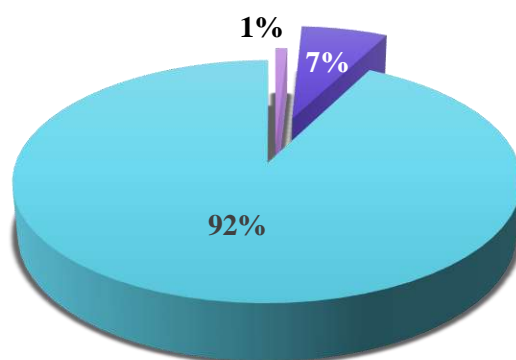
Do you find the Erasmus FIT4DIGILINE project interesting? (% value)



Would like to be updated with project activities and would you like to join the next activities? (% value)

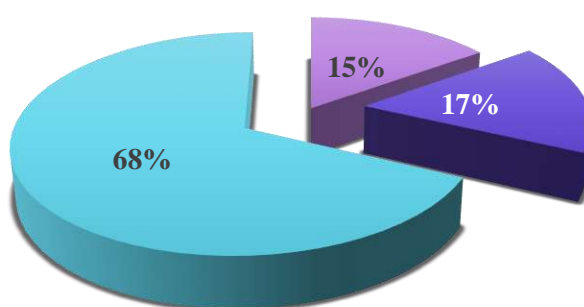


Do you believe teachers should enhance and improve their digital skills? (% value)



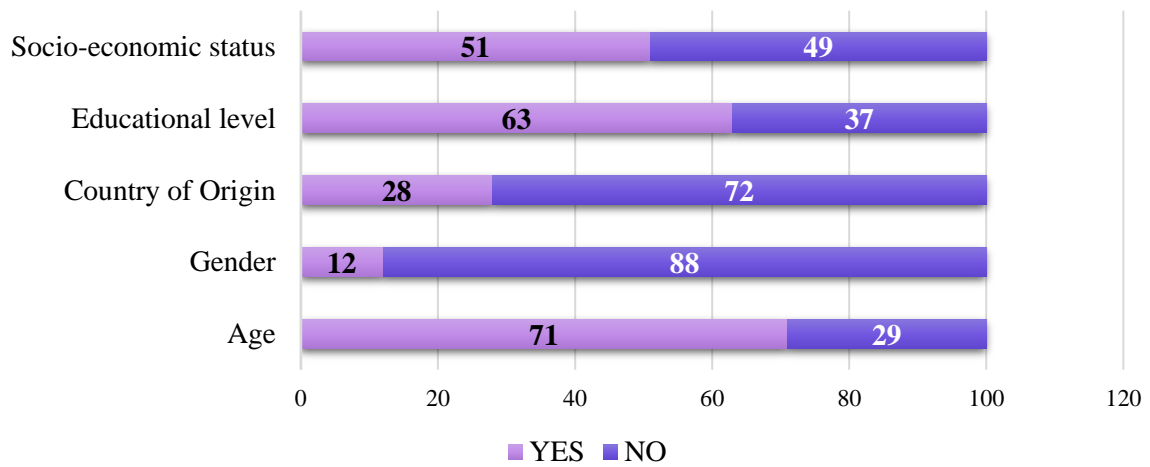
■ No ■ I don't know ■ Yes

Do you think that learners are more interested in learning languages with the help of digital tools? (% value)

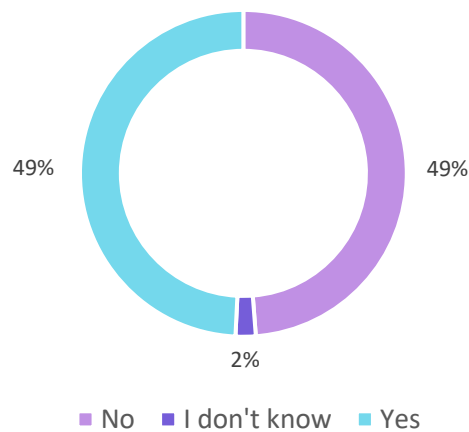


■ No ■ I don't know ■ Yes

Perceived differences in learners' approach to the use of digital tools based on: (% value)

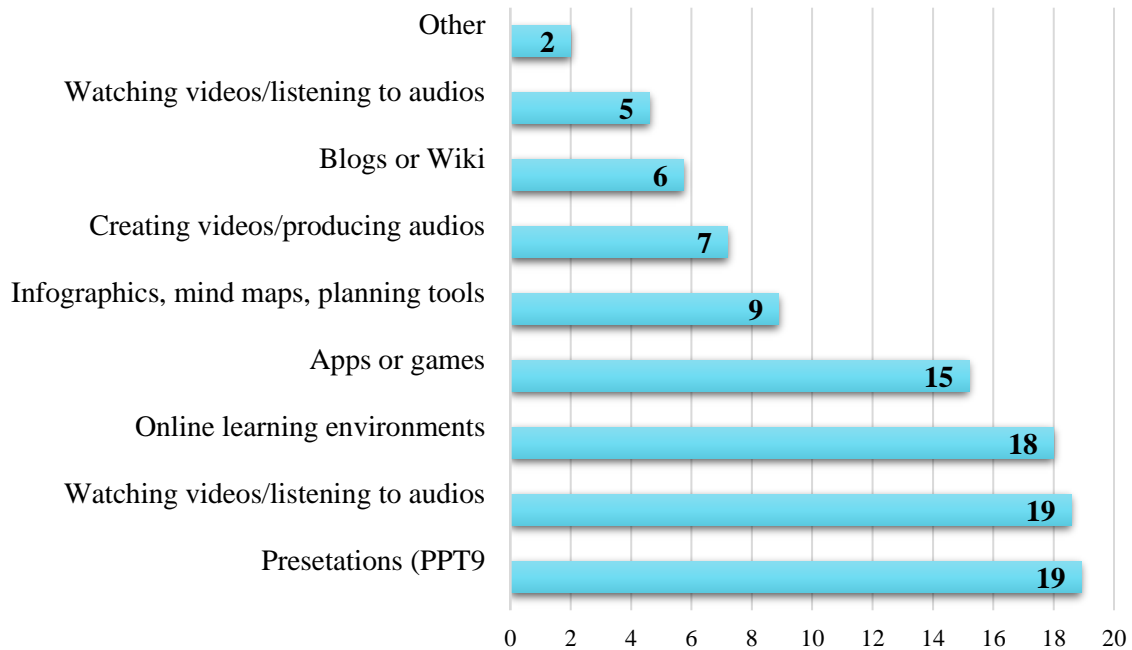


In the facility/school where you work, have you ever encountered difficulties/barriers in using digital tools and resources during your lessons? (% value)

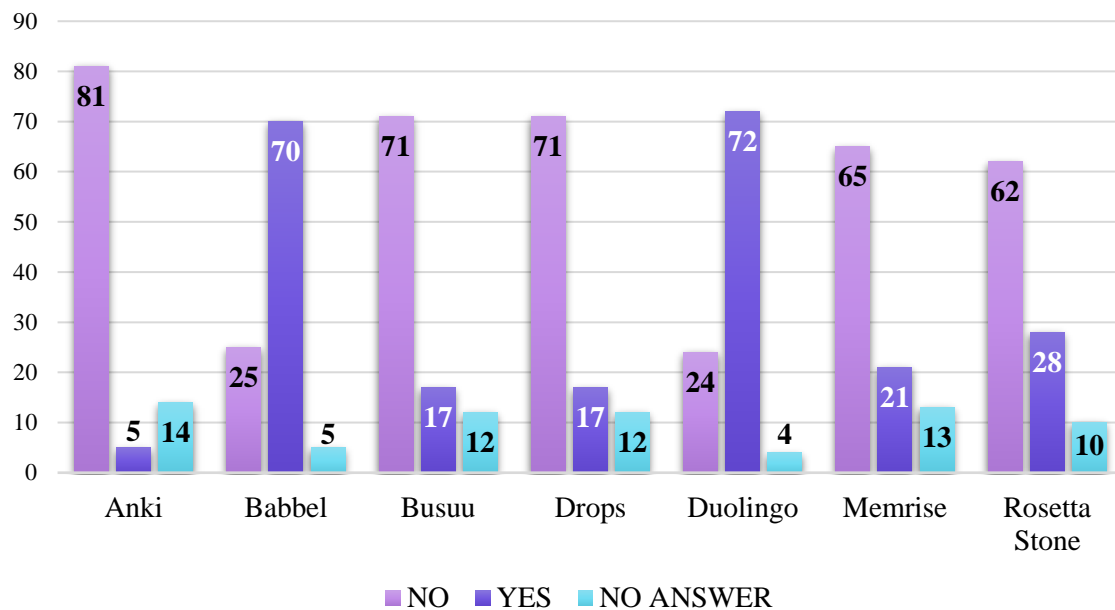


Which digital tools do you use to support learning and teaching activities?

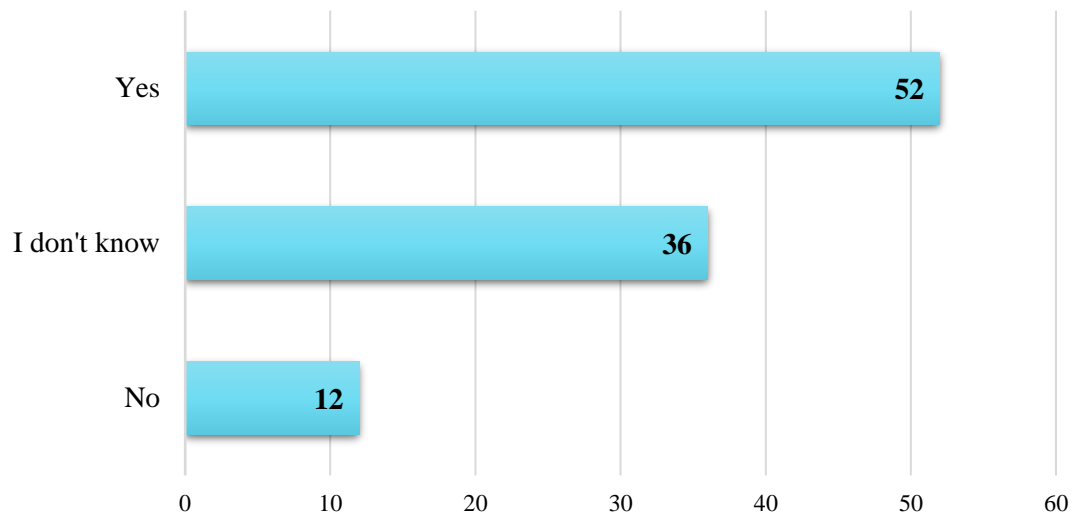
(% value - $n=888$)



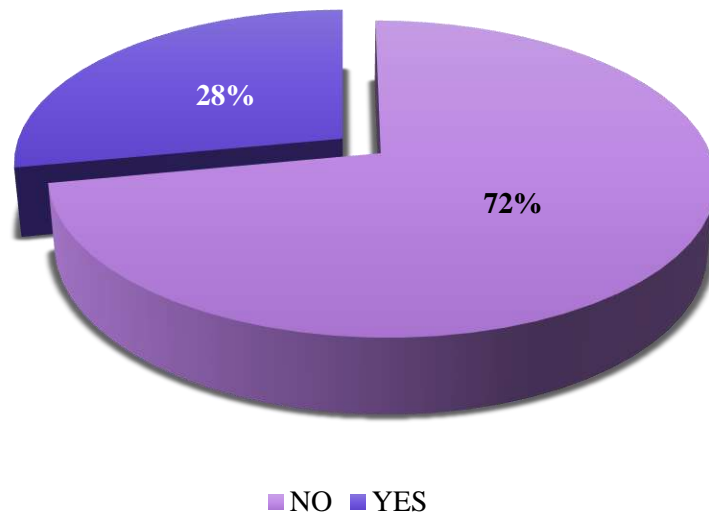
Are you familiar with these apps? (% value)



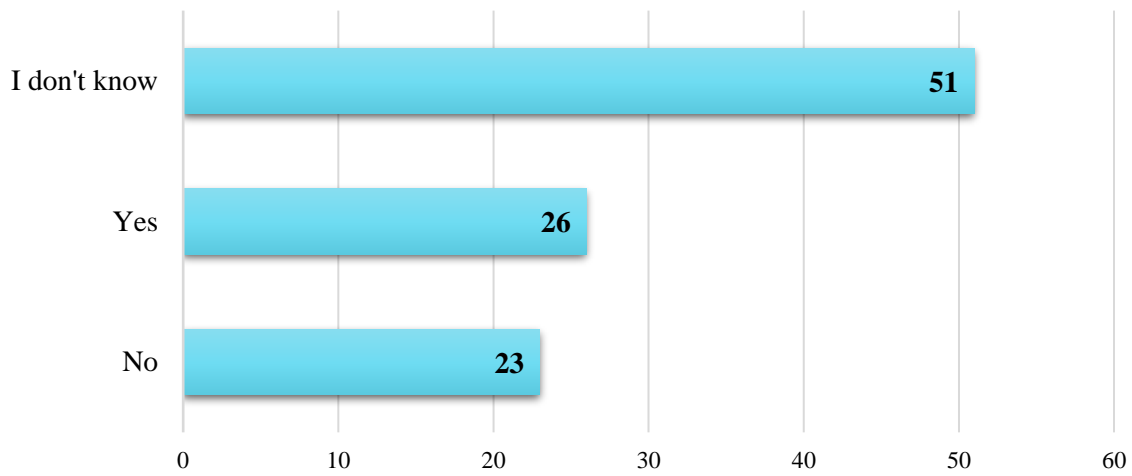
Do you think they might be useful for teaching purposes? (% value)



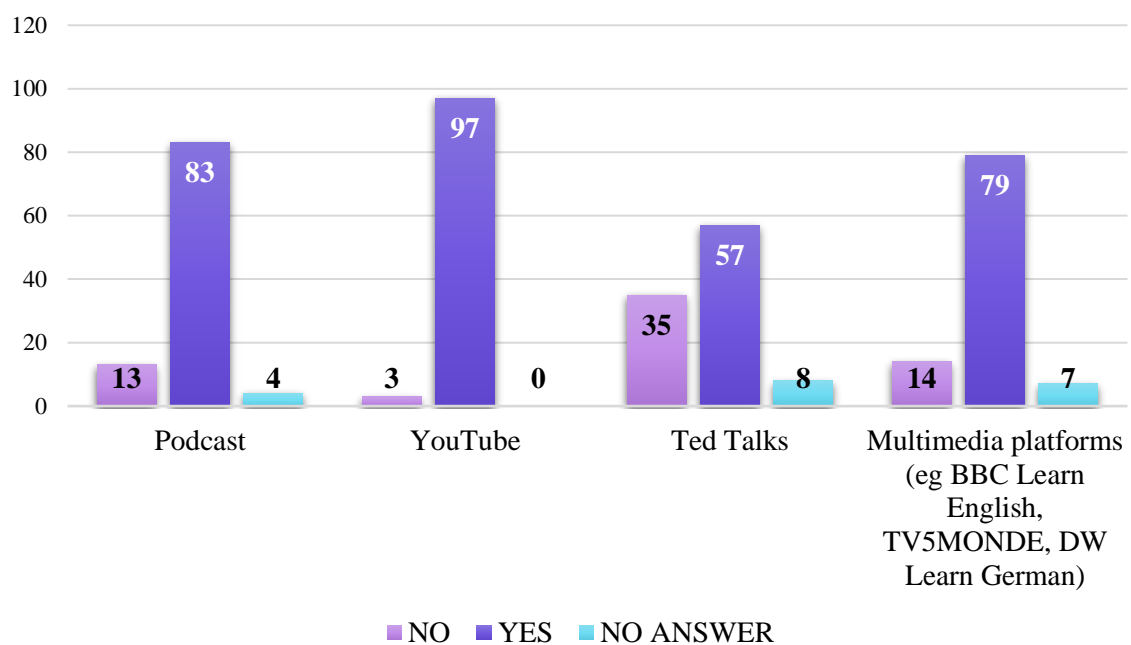
Do you use these apps during your lessons? (% value)



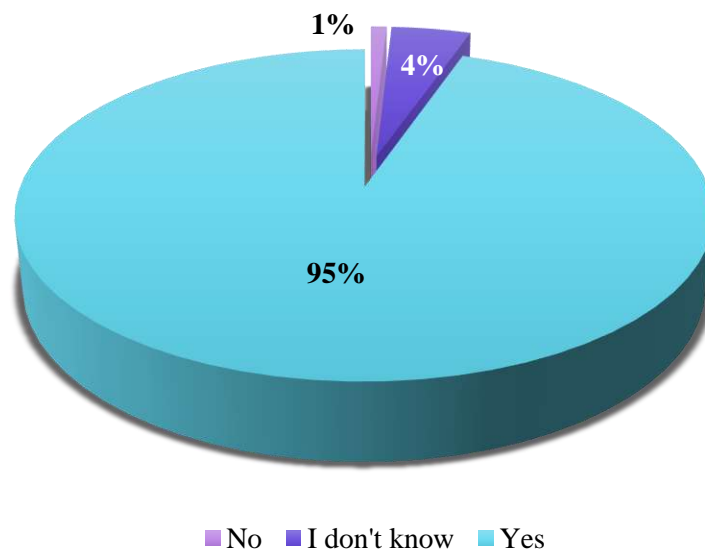
Would you like to use them in the future? (% value - n=164)



Are you familiar with the following audio/video resources? (% value)



Do you think they might be useful for teaching purposes? (% value)



Do you use these apps during your lessons? (% value)

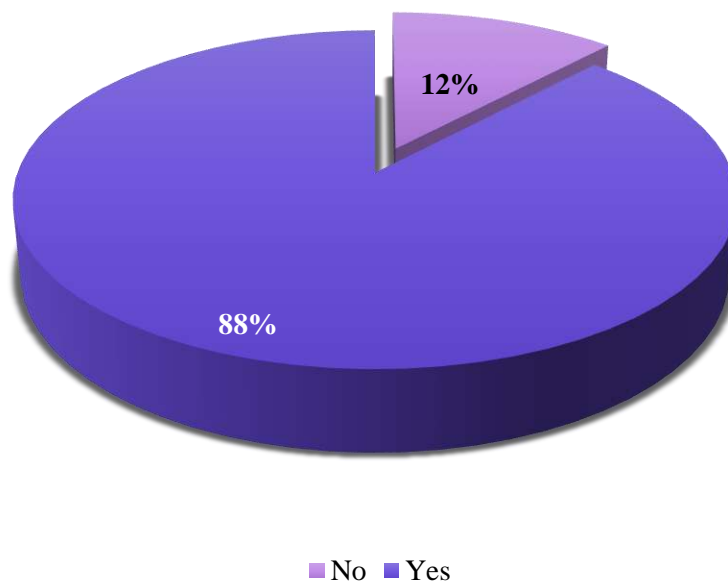


TABLE 1

We would like to know your opinion about the use of digital tools and technologies and how they could benefit the language sector. Please indicate how important the following propositions are to you (1=not at all; 5=very important)

AREA 1 – Professional engagement	Average
Using digital technologies to improve the communication with your learners and colleagues (e.g.: emails, blogs, websites, apps)	4,2
Using digital technologies to work with your colleagues	4
Developing personal and digital skills and competencies for teaching purposes	4,3
Participating in online training activities (e.g. online courses, MOOCs, webinars)	4,1

AREA 2 - Digital resources	Average
Using different websites and research strategies to find and select digital resources to use with learners	4,3
Creating your own digital resources and modifying existing ones to adapt them to your needs	3,8
Protecting sensitive data	4,2

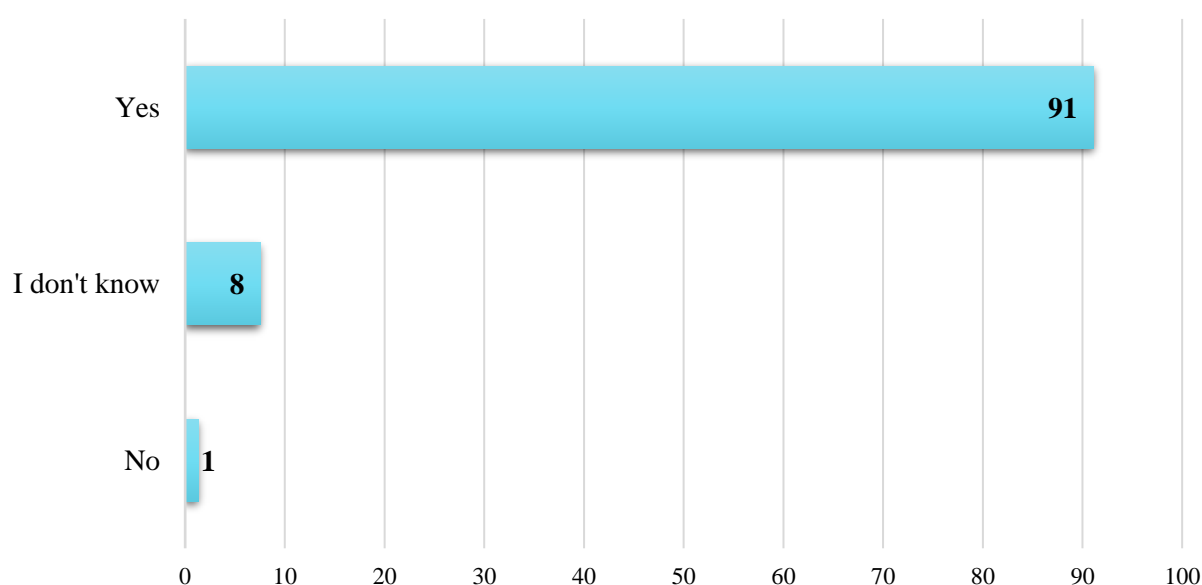
AREA 3 - Teaching and learning strategies	Average
Using digital tools to enhance the effectiveness of the learning progress	4,6
Monitoring learners' activities and interactions in collaborative digital environments	4
Using digital technologies in groups	3,9

AREA 4 – Assessment	Average
Using digital assessment tools to monitor students' performance and progress	3,8
Using digital technologies to provide effective feedback to students	3,9

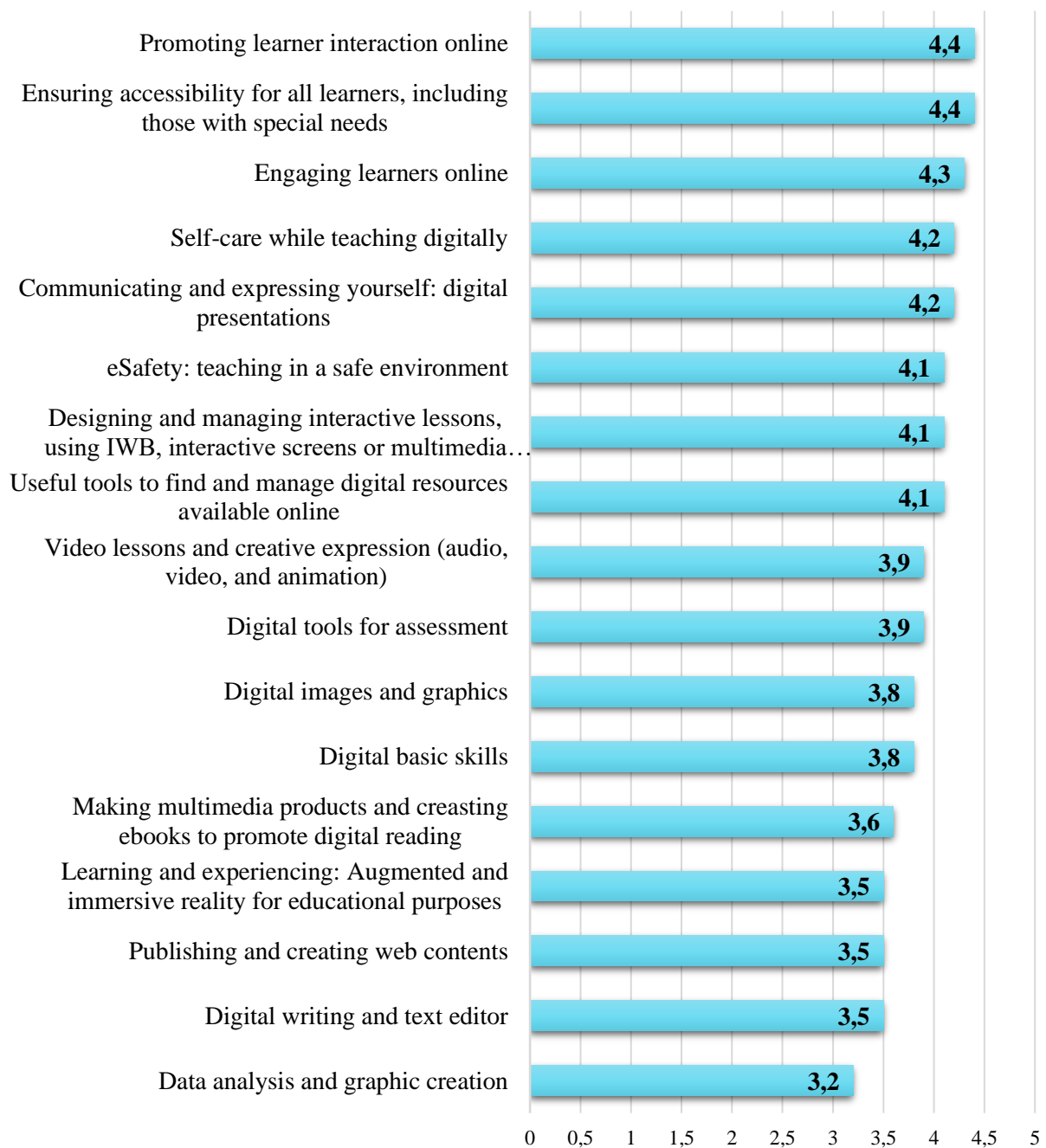
AREA 5 – Empowering learners	Average
When creating deliveries for learners, taking into account any practical or technical difficulties learners may have (e.g. equal access to digital devices and resources; interoperability and conversion problems; lack of digital skills)	4,2
Using digital technologies to provide students with personalised learning opportunities (e.g. the educator will set up several digital activities for the students in order to meet a variety of educational needs and different preferences and interests)	4,2
Using digital tools to enable students to participate actively	4,2

AREA 6 - Facilitating Learners' Digital Competence	Average
Teaching learners how to assess the reliability of the information they find and how to identify invented, misleading, or distorted information	4,1
Creating learning activities, assignments and assessments which require learners to create digital content (e.g. videos, audio recordings, photos, digital presentations, blogs, wiki)	3,6
Teaching learners how to use digital technologies safely and responsibly	4,1
Encouraging learners to use digital tools creatively to solve real problems	3,9

Do you think that the health emergency (COVID-19) has contributed to boost the use of digital resources in language teaching? (% value)



Importance of suggested training modules (average value on a scale of 1=not at all to 5=very)



MANAGERS' VOICE

The online managers' survey collected the opinions of 51 managers working in the foreign language teaching sector in the five partner countries (Figure 25). Most respondents are aged between 35 and 54 (Figure 26); more than half of them (57%) work in a private organisation (Figure 27) and have many years of experience in this field (Figure 28). They carry out managerial and organizational activities in different educational institutions at all levels (Figure 29) - mainly in language schools (33%) and adult education providers (20%).

In the organisation for which they work, the digital tools and resources that are most frequently used while teaching foreign languages are presentations, watching videos/listening to audios, and online learning environments (Figure 30).

Almost 60% of the managers felt that there are still some barriers to the use of digital tools and/or resources while teaching (Figure 31). These include lack of equipment and inadequate internet access, as well as limitations in skills and human resources.

The benefits of using digital technologies to teach languages are rated highly in every area we investigated namely: professional engagement and skills enhancement; creation and management of resources (especially with regard to data protection); teaching and learning practices; assessment; learner empowerment; and the development of students' digital skills (Figure 32).

As regards the knowledge of some useful educational apps for foreign languages, Babel and Duolingo stand out among those proposed in the survey (Figure 33), with some managers also identifying the use of other apps. Half of managerial respondents believe that the use of these tools is valuable. The "I don't know" response correlates with having expressed a "lack of knowledge" about the limits and potential in the use of the proposed applications. (Figure 34).

YouTube, Podcasts, and multimedia portals are the most common audio and/or video resources (Figure 35). These tools are considered to be extremely useful for education and are highly used in transmitting language skills to students.

According to our respondents, age, educational level, and socio-economic status are the three variables that most effect students' approach to language teaching through digital tools and resources (Figure. 36). Managers feel that age can affect awareness of technology and resistance to its use; educational level and socio-economic status may increase resistance to the idea of studying using different methods or with different digital tools, and can limit access to necessary devices.

Despite the difficulties and resistance, 80% of managers do nonetheless believe that students are more interested in learning languages with the help of digital tools (Figure 37). This explains why every respondent (100%) agrees that it is necessary to strengthen the digital skills of foreign language teachers. 65% of respondents say they have encountered difficulties in finding teachers with adequate digital skills (Figure 38).

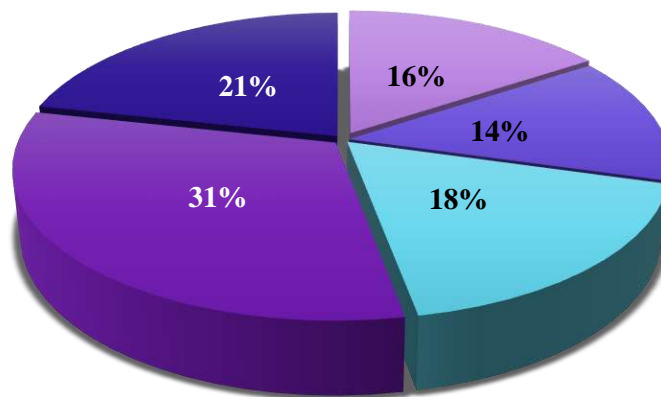
All the proposed modules for a potential digital training for teachers received a high average rating, especially those concerning promoting learner interaction and engagement, ensuring accessibility and inclusion, and self-care while teaching/learning online (Figure 39).

41% of our respondents know DigComp and only 22% know DigCompEdu (Figure 40).

90% of respondents said that the Covid-19 pandemic has significantly contributed to the use of digital resources and tools useful for teaching foreign languages (Figure 41).

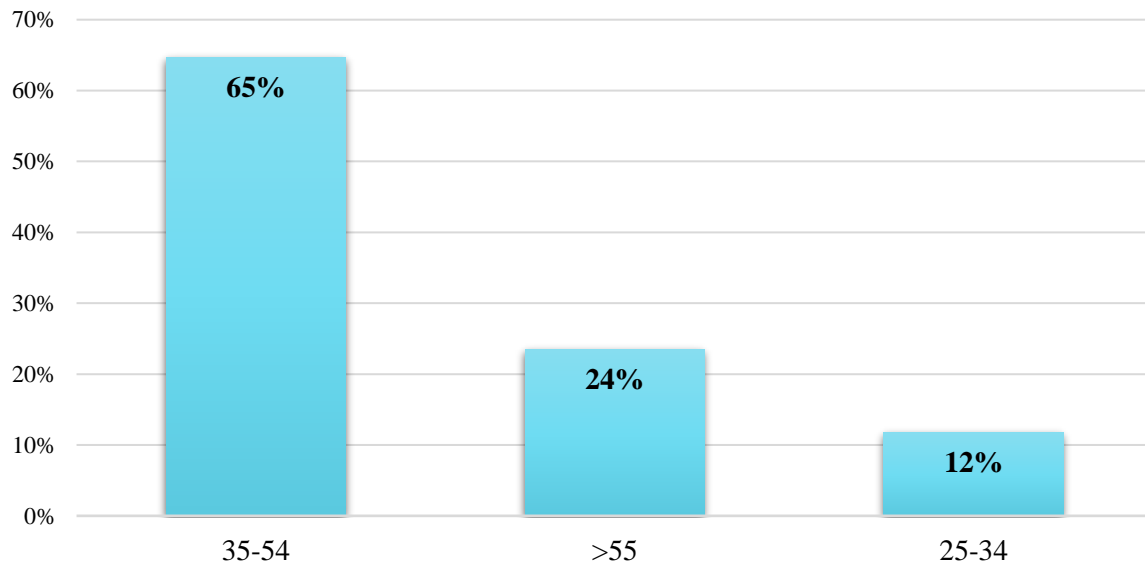
Lastly, the Fit4DigiLinE project is considered to be very interesting for almost all respondents and 69% of managers would like to receive information and/or participate in the project activities (Figure 42).

Manager Responses by country (% value) n= 51)

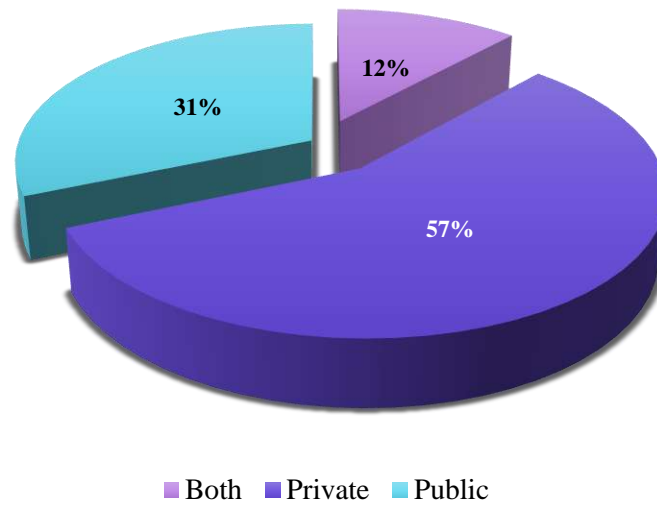


■ Austria ■ Finland ■ Greece ■ Italy ■ Spain

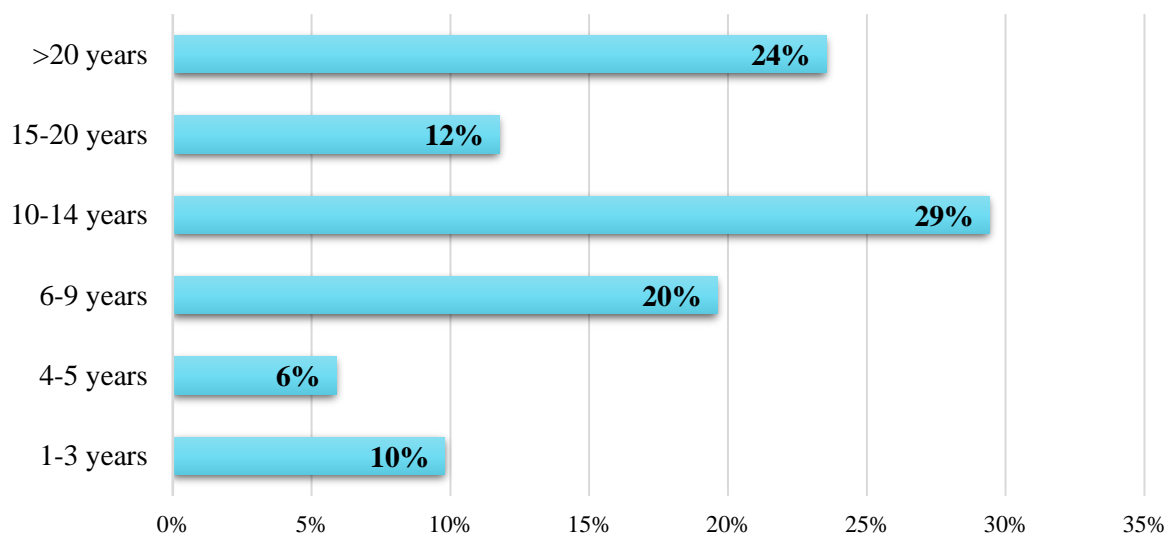
Age of respondents (% value)



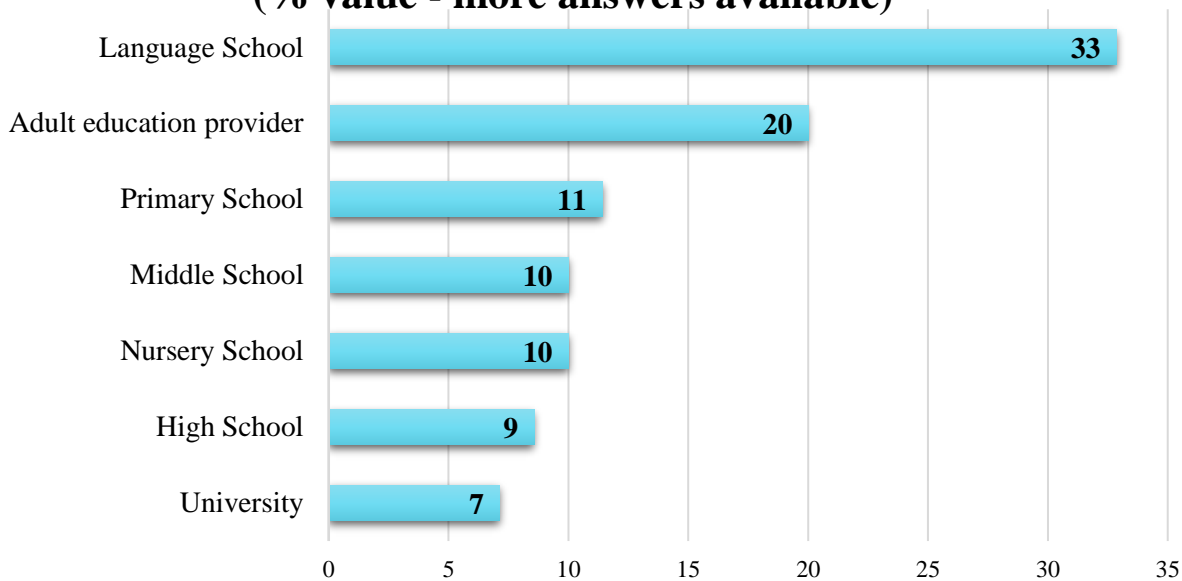
Do you work for a public or private institution? (% value)



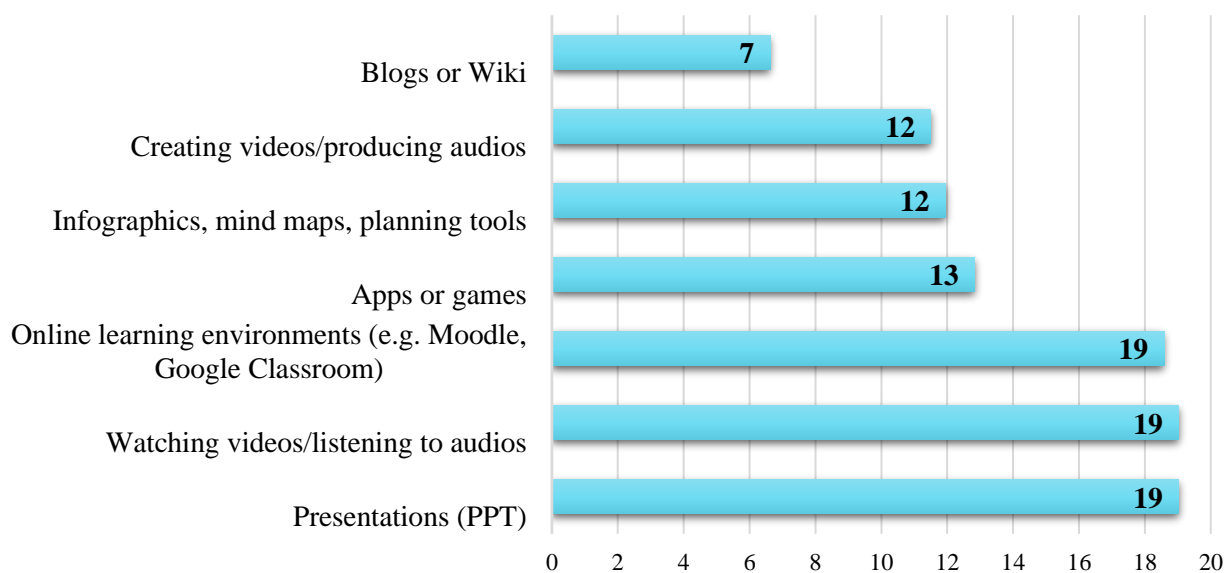
How long have you been working? (% value)



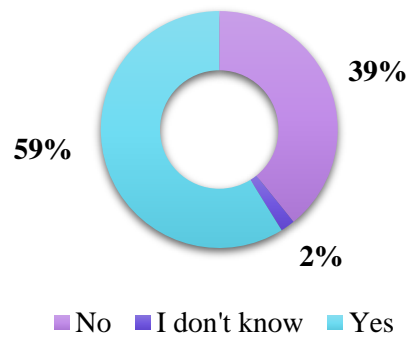
Where do you work? (% value - more answers available)



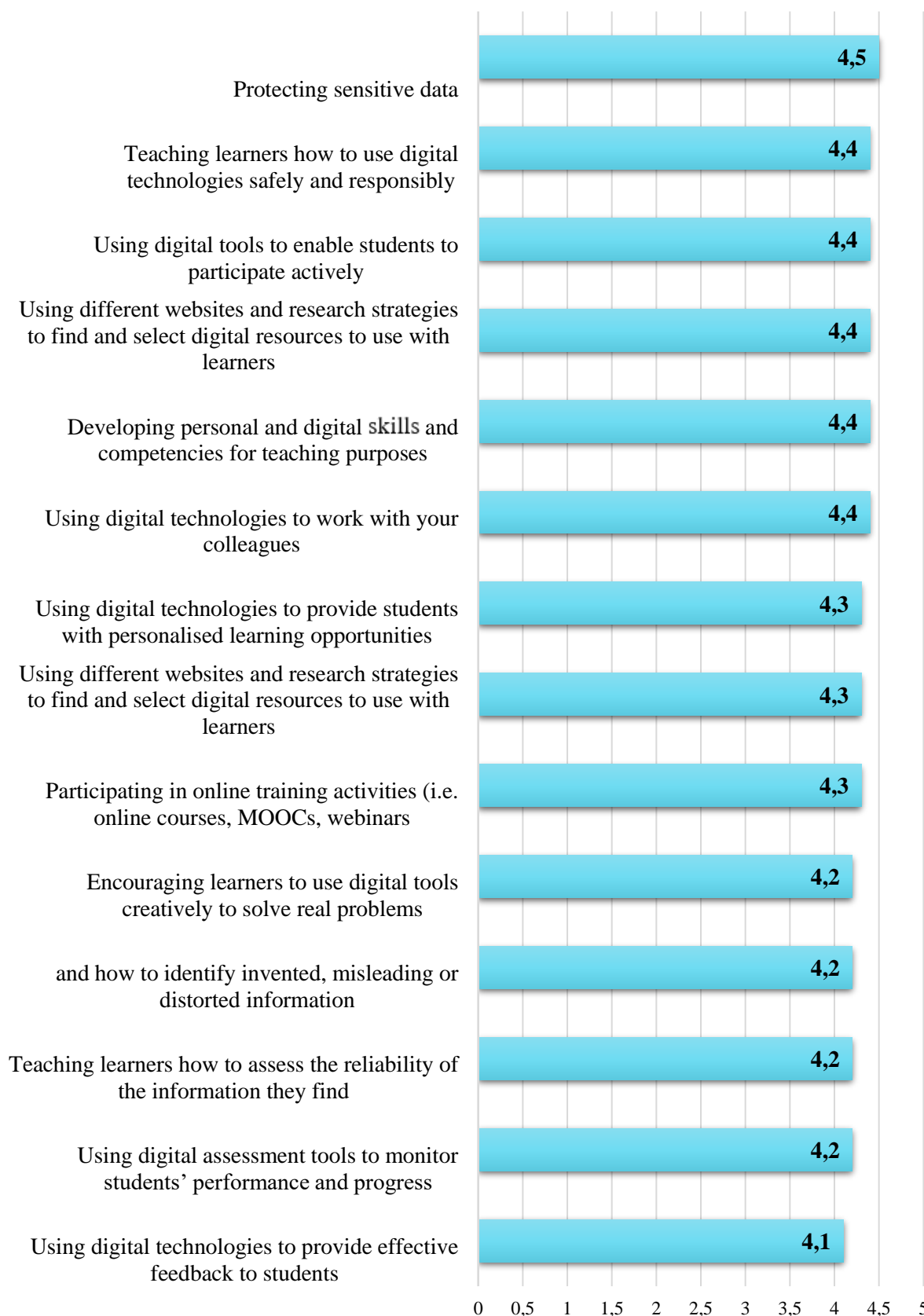
Which digital tools do you use? (% value)



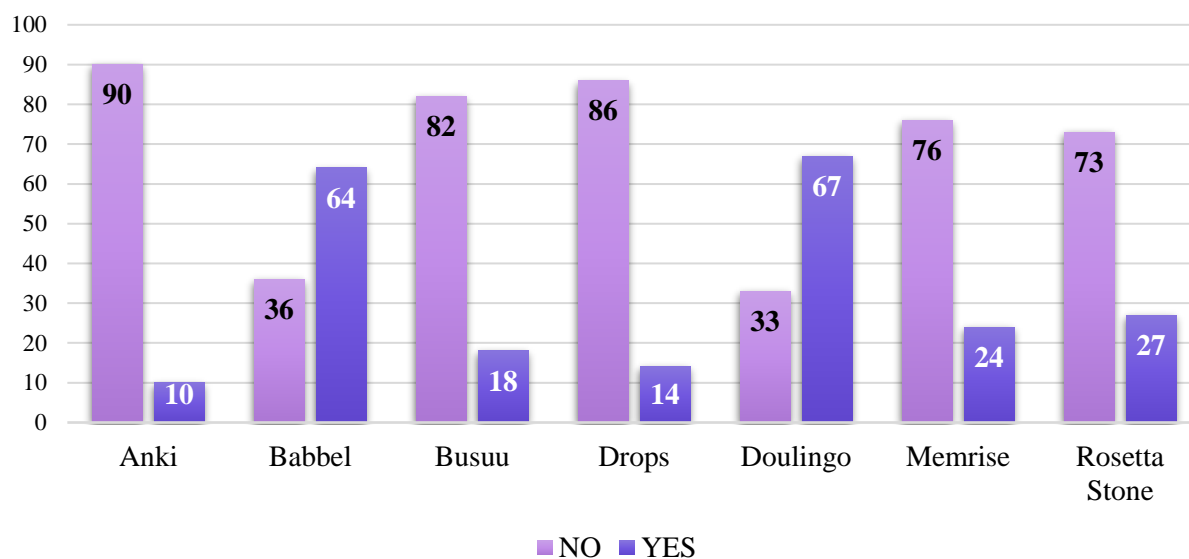
**In the facility/school where you work, have you ever encountered difficulties/barriers in using digital tools and resources during your lessons?
(% value)**



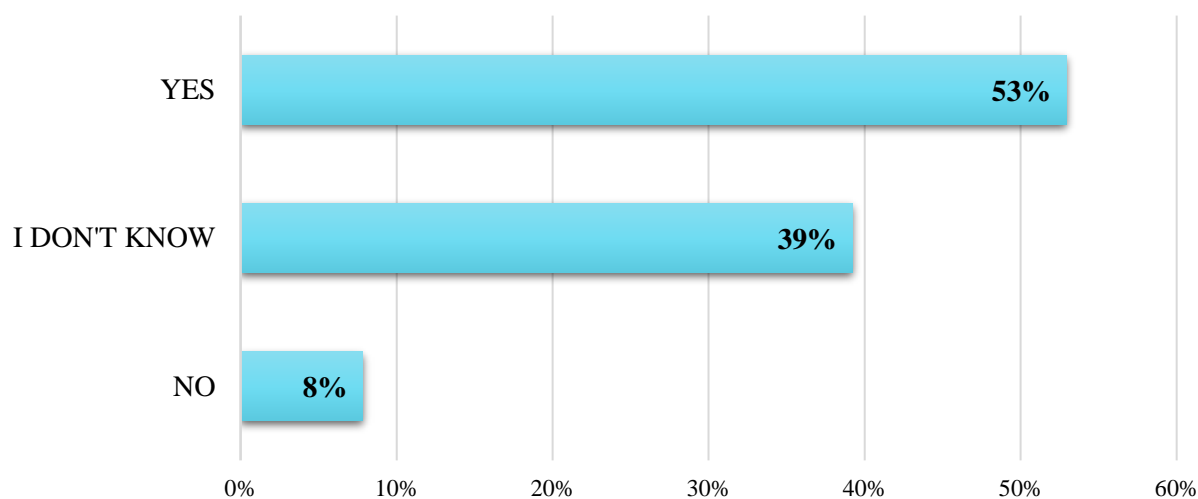
Benefits of the use of digital tools and technologies (average value on a scale of 1=not to 5=very)



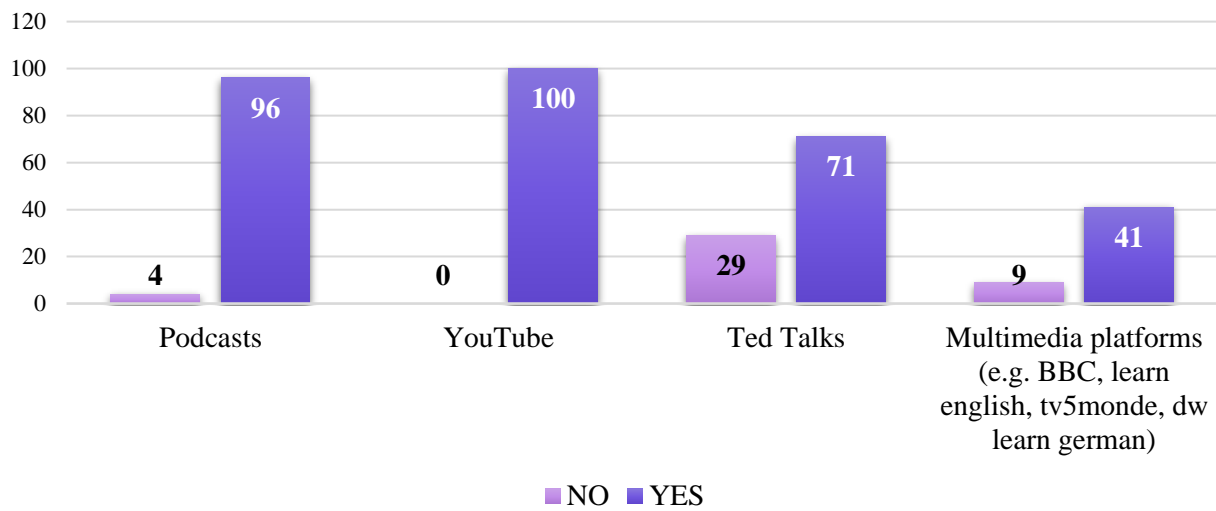
Are you familiar with these apps? (% value)



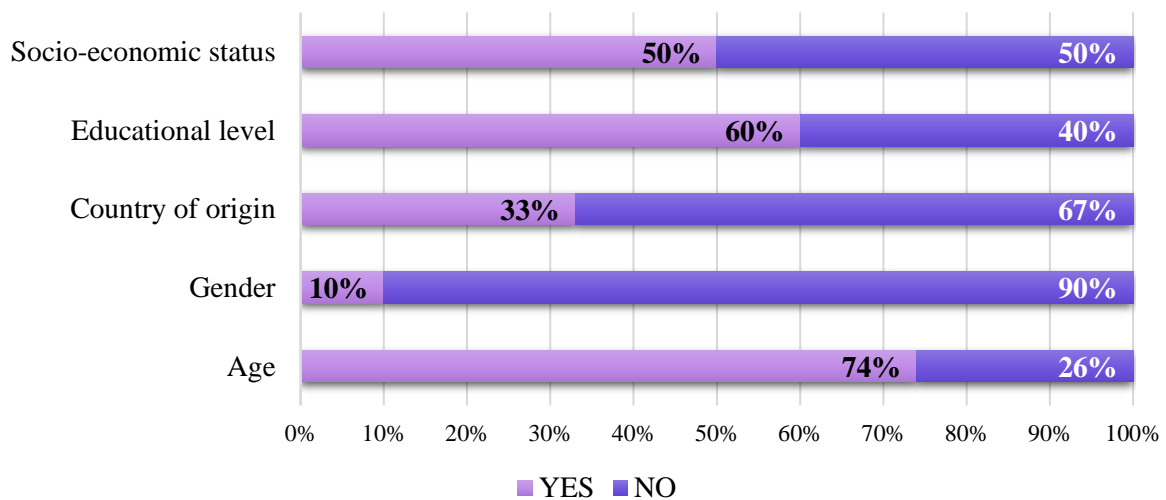
Do you think they might be useful for teaching purposes? (% value)



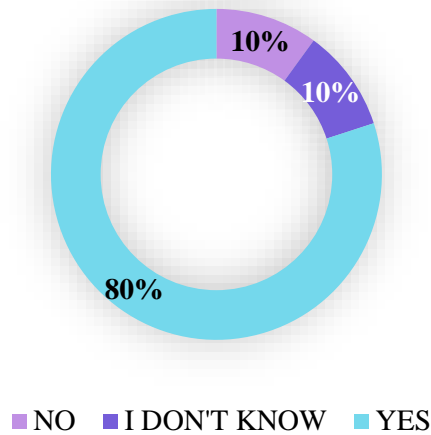
Are you familiar with the following audio/video resources? (% value)



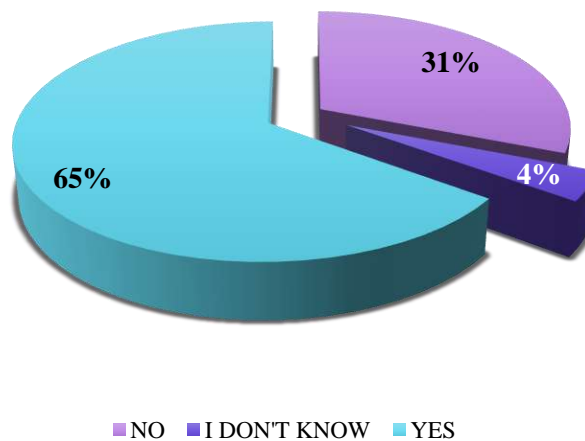
Perceived differences in learners' approach to the use of digital tools based on: (% value)



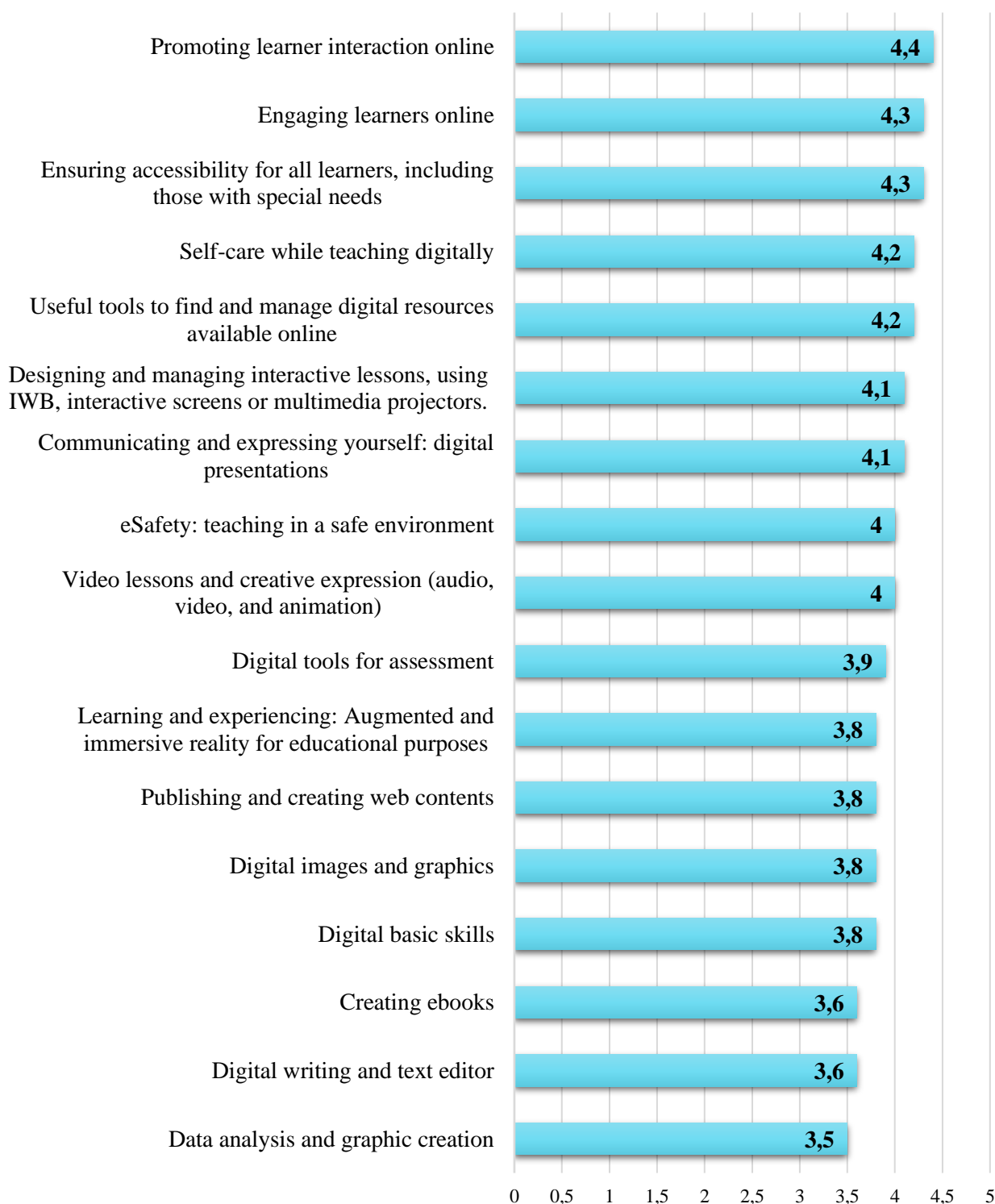
Do you think that learners are more interested in learning languages with the help of digital tools? (% value)



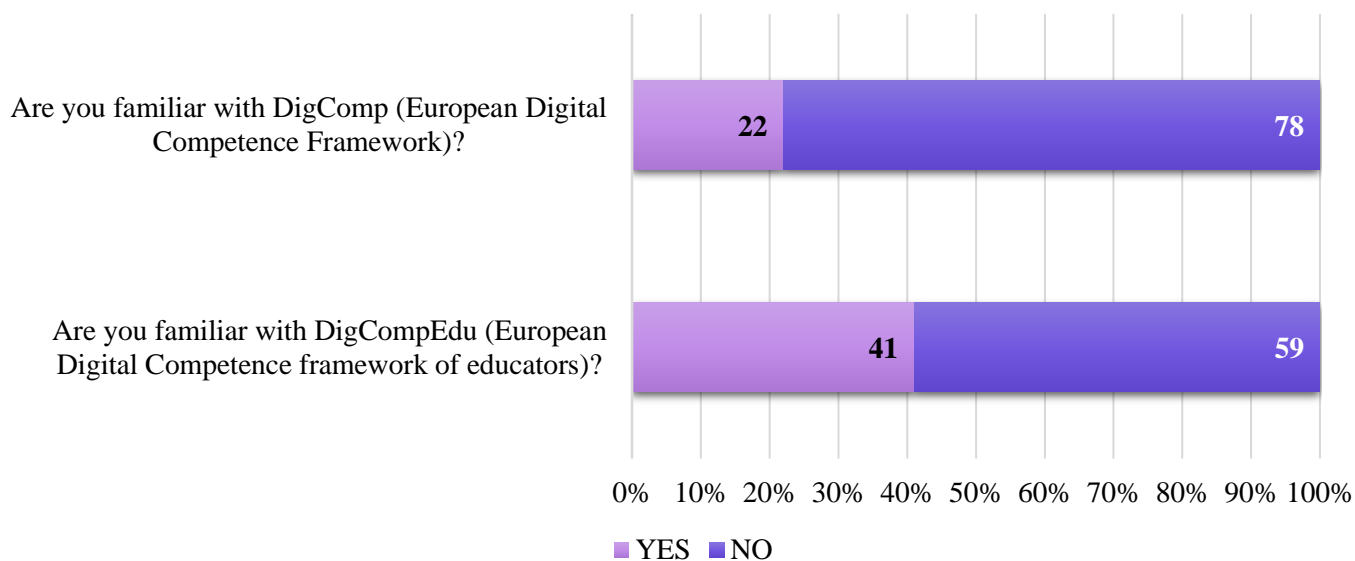
Does your school/institution have difficulty in finding teachers with adequate digital skills?



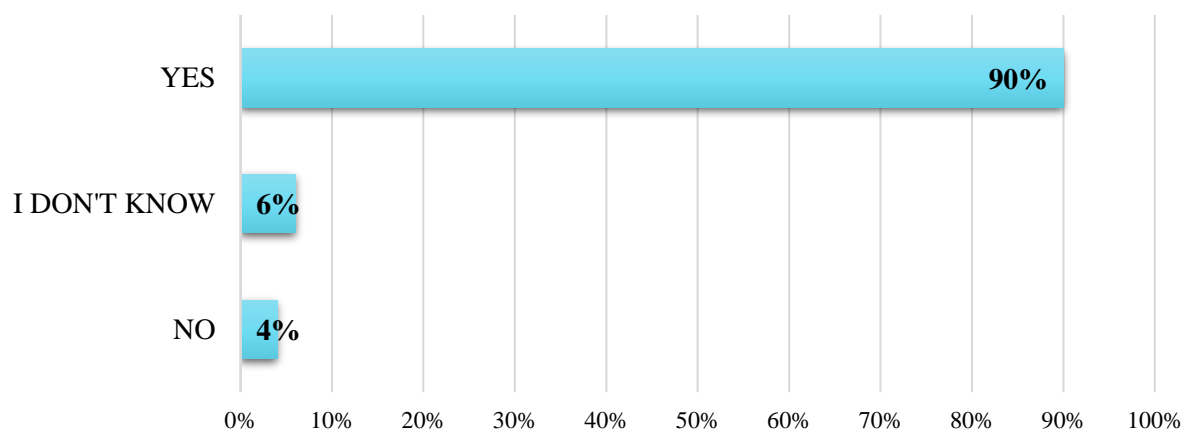
Importance of suggested training modules (average value on a scale of 1=not at all to 5=very)



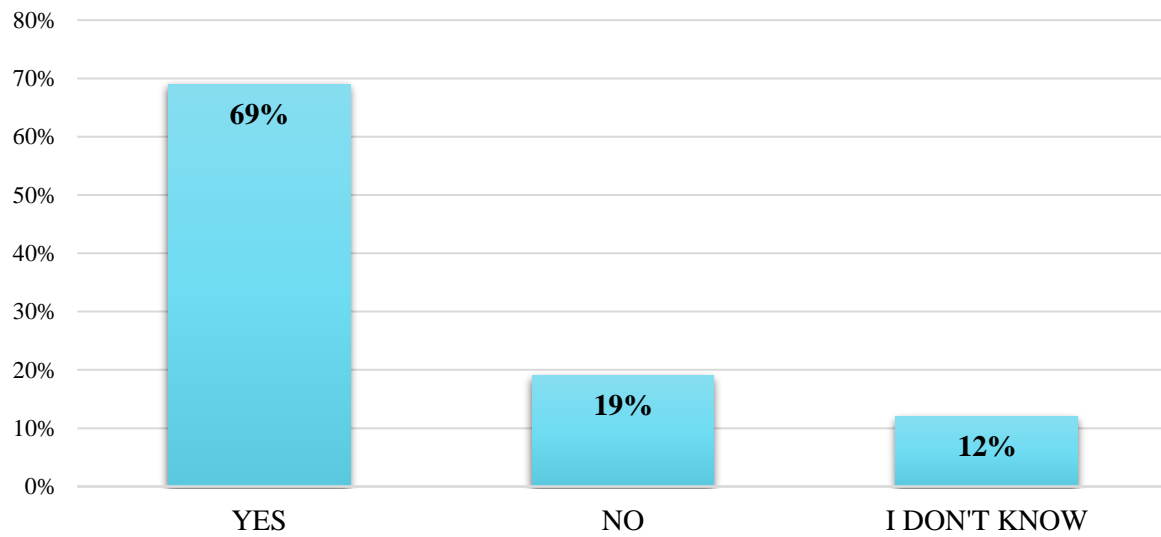
Familiarity with DigComp and DigCompEdu (% value)



Do you think that the health emergency (COVID-19) has contributed to boost the use of digital resources in language teaching? (% value)



**Would like to be updated with project activities;
would you like to join the next activities?
(% value)**



4.2. Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews are a qualitative data collection method that involves direct, one-on-one engagement with individual participants. During such meetings, interviewers do not strictly follow a formalised list of questions but will ask more open-ended questions, allowing for a discussion with the interviewee rather than a straightforward question and answer format. The goal of the semi-structured, individual interviews is to collect contextual and complementary data that can be integrated with the other datasets derived from the different tools used throughout the research.

4.2.1. Methodological approach

Before running the interviews, the interviewer will reflect, and develop an outline to follow by listing the topics that need to be covered during the conversation: usually in a particular order, although different topical trajectories can be undertaken, if appropriate.

The interview outline used is set out below; this was adapted according to partners' needs.

Pre-interview

- Start by collecting some preliminary information (e.g. participant's background, expertise and knowledge of the topic);
- If the interview is conducted online, use a videoconferencing system that participants are familiar with, and which gives you the option of recording the conversation;
- Participants should be aware that the interview may be recorded for the sake of research. Transcriptions will be anonymised and will be used only for project purposes;
- Prepare a list of topics in advance. Use non-direct questions when possible ("Please describe how it started" instead of "When did it start?"). Since it is a qualitative interview, the answers should be as detailed and thoughtful as possible. To encourage this, facilitate storytelling and ask open-ended questions, avoiding leading ones;
- Run a pilot interview with a friend or a colleague.

During the interview

- Give a short introduction to the project and explain the objectives of the research phase. Put participants at ease, assuring confidentiality of data collected;
- Before asking a question, try to create a relaxed atmosphere and develop a friendly relation with the interviewee. Begin by asking them to talk about themselves and their connection with the topic;
- Use active listening techniques;
- Listen between the lines;
- Keep control of the interview;

- Avoid sensitive questions. Do not ask questions which may hurt participants' religious, social, political, economic, moral values etc;
- Do not repeat the questions. If the respondent declines to comment or answer a question, do not repeat it directly. It may be useful to try to reframe it, asking the same question in some other form.

Possible questions

- Based on your experience, are digital resources (tools and technologies) used in language teaching? Can you please describe your professional reality at local and national level?
- Are there any obstacles when using digital tools? If so, can you please tell us more?
- What are the advantages of using these resources? And what are the disadvantages? (Both from the teachers' and students' perspectives).
- Are you aware of any good practice examples in the field? Please give details.
- Let's imagine we have to plan a training course. What are the key competencies and core skills we should focus on?
- Do you believe the health emergency (COVID 19) has contributed to digitalise the education system?
- Can you think of any useful and interesting digital tools and resources?

PS: Feel free to change the order of the questions.

At the end of the interview

- Ask the respondent whether they want to add something more.

Reporting procedure: after conducting the interviews, partners completed an online reporting template, elaborating a personal interpretation of the data.

4.3. Focus groups

Focus group research is a qualitative research method/data collection technique that seeks to gather information that is beyond the scope of quantitative analysis. Our focus groups were structured to foster discussion among the participants and to gather more information about attitudes and behaviours, beyond that which was in the survey results. The purpose was to encourage the group participants to share their views from multiple perspectives, so that our researchers could get an overview of the range of opinions about the use of digital technologies for language teaching and learning; and to promote thoughtful discussion on the topic. In addition, the goal of our focus groups was to generate contextual and complementary data to integrate with the other datasets derived from surveys, individual interviews, and literature research. Data gathered during focus groups might also be used to contest or qualify earlier survey data. A final goal of the focus groups was to discuss good practices with which participants were familiar, and to collect useful examples of these.

4.3.1. Methodological approach

Given the difficulties of carrying out in-person meetings due to the COVID-19 pandemic, project partners involved in the field research for the collection of qualitative data made use of alternative meeting methods. Meetings were primarily held using online tools agreed with all the participants involved (e.g. Google Meet, Zoom, Skype, GoToMeeting).

Strict control of the discussion by the facilitator was avoided as unnecessary and potentially counter-productive. The facilitators did however try to encourage the expression of a full range of viewpoints within the discussion. To ensure that the focus groups were productive - and to avoid becoming an imposition on participants' time - they were organised to last no longer than 90 minutes.

In order to facilitate the smooth running of the focus groups, the partnership developed an [Interview and Focus Group Guide](#), which was then translated into the partner languages (German, Italian, Greek, Spanish and Finnish).

The focus groups were aligned with the online survey, with the issues investigated in the survey used as prompts for the discussion.

Set out below is the list of questions which were used in the focus groups.

Engagement questions

- Do you think that digital technology represents an important tool for language teaching?

Exploration questions

- What specific competences should be developed in this area to maximise their impact and obtain better results?
- Have you ever used an online teaching environment?
 - If yes, how was your experience?
 - If not, was there any reason that has held you back from doing so?
- Which are the features that would make online tools more suitable to your needs and expectations?

Exit question

- Is there anything else you would like to say about the topic of this focus group or the Fit4DigiLinE project in general?

4.4. Summary of results and comparison of findings

Paragraphs 4.4.1 and 4.4.2 set out the detailed analysis by individual project partners of the answers collected during the semi-structured interviews and focus groups in each country.

Tables 2 to 5 below contain a brief summary of the results and allow for comparison and combination of responses.

Tables 2A and 2B offer a country-by-country comparison of some of the issues under investigation during the interviews and focus groups,

The semi-structured interviews summary (Table 2A) focuses on the following areas:

- The current situation of digitisation in language teaching;
- The benefits of using digital tools and technologies in language teaching;
- Tools available;
- The perceived need for improvement of digital skills
- The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on online teaching
- Knowledge of DigComp and DigCompEdu.

The summary of focus group discussions (Table 2B), sets out findings in the following categories:

- The current situation of digitisation in language teaching;
- The benefits of using digital tools and technologies in language teaching;
- The disadvantages
- The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on online teaching
- Training needs

Table 3 offers an overview of the main strengths highlighted by participants in relation to the use of digital tools in language teaching.

Table 4 sets out the difficulties encountered by participants and concerns that – according to some participants – a complete digital transfer could undermine the enhancement of language skills.

Finally, **Table 5** sets out the suggestions that were collected for the training needed to develop teachers' digital, personal, and social skills.

TABLE 2 A: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS - MAIN FINDINGS					
	AUSTRIA	ITALY	GREECE	FINLAND	SPAIN
Current situation of digitalisation in language teaching	Language teachers frequently do not yet have the digital skills they would need; they have no experience. Many do not receive advice or information from the institutes they work in	Schools and higher education institutions are still far behind in integrating and understanding the potential of digital tools to enhance language teaching.	A strong desire to develop and integrate digital technology into foreign language teaching is felt in both formal and informal education.	Teachers use a wide range of digital tools when teaching languages	Teachers in Spain are increasingly using digital resources in language teaching.
Benefits and utility	High	High	High	High	High
Tools available	Good	Average	Average	Above average	Average
Digital skills	Need to be developed	Need to be developed	Need to be developed	Need to be developed	Need to be developed
Online teaching before and after COVID-19: how has it changed?	The COVID pandemic has helped to digitise language teaching and digital learning settings are increasingly offered. Distance learning platforms and new training proposals are available.	Technology-based educational innovation has provided possibilities and opportunities that we could not have imagined in the past.	The use of technology and multimedia for foreign language teaching has expanded rapidly, especially recently. Teachers have been asked to reorganise and redesign the way they teach languages and change their pedagogical methods to adapt learning objectives to the needs of learners	Most teachers had never taught online before the pandemic outbreak. It has now become the norm. For many – especially those working in high schools, universities and adult education centres – it is the only way they have been teaching in the last year.	The way of teaching has radically changed, and the pandemic has accelerated this process.
DigComp and DigCompEdu – degree of knowledge	Little	Little	N/A	N/A	N/A

TABLE 2 B FOCUS GROUPS – MAIN FINDINGS	AUSTRIA	ITALY	GREECE	FINLAND	SPAIN
Current situation of digitalisation in language teaching	Due to the pandemic outbreak, there has been a big shift to digital teaching. Much is offered to provide students with good facilities for online teaching and the necessary devices are provided if they do not have them.	Acknowledgement of the usefulness of using technology to transfer language skills and knowledge, which are still held back for technical reasons (connection and availability of IT devices) and cultural reasons due to resistance to embarking on a different way of doing school.	Rapid growth in the use of digital media. Most digital tools were already available in the past, but the pandemic has forced language teachers to rely on distance learning.	General satisfaction with the state of the digital infrastructure. All teachers have access to fast broadband and are able to teach remotely. There are some problems with the use of new technologies for both young and old, although to a limited extent.	Awareness of the usefulness of technology to transmit language skills and knowledge, slowed down by instrumental difficulties and cultural resistance.
Main strengths	collaboration; time organisation; listening skills	involvement; flexibility; reduced distances; fun; interest; developing potential; and - above all - possibility of experiencing the language for real	improved communication; organisation of time; 'breaking the distance'; increased interaction; involvement; professional growth; curiosity; fun	access to authentic, real-world learning materials; interactivity; fun; integration; teamwork; differentiation; work organisation; personalised study plans.	easy-to-follow lessons; organisation of time
Main weaknesses	Online teaching is time-consuming and intensive; technical problems; health problems; lack of personal interaction in presence; problems in working in groups	There are weaknesses caused by the "material" resources available, such as the lack of equipment, as well as the poor internet connection in some areas. There are also "immaterial" weaknesses - which create resistance - due to the lack of specific skills and knowledge on how to teach and learn differently; Risk of learners' distraction loss of the face-to-face relationship.	Lack of adequate resources to participate in an online course, i.e. lack of adequate equipment (computer, microphone, headset) and a good internet connection. Lower concentration. Increased access inequality. Limitation of body language in the communication process. Problems of smooth and linear communication.	Planning of training sessions (organisation and management) more time-consuming; Technological problems leading to "time wasting" during training Distraction and less participation in group work activities; More difficult objective evaluations.	Technical difficulties; Less interpersonal interaction; Less participation.

<p>Online teaching before and after COVID-19: how has it changed?</p>	<p>Before COVID-19, digital tools were rarely used in language teaching. Because of the pandemic, most teaching switched to online teaching. This was a difficult transition at first, but now people have become accustomed to online teaching. Work between teachers has become more collaborative and, in some cases, work has been simplified.</p>	<p>Big chance to solve long-standing technological problems and to develop a new way of bringing languages to life</p>	<p>Chance to create change in teaching, with a different response from the age of learners.</p>	<p>Teachers have come to accept the “new normality” and have worked to adapt their teaching materials and approaches.</p>	<p>Greater willingness to use technological tools and more engaging resources.</p>
<p>Training needs</p>	<p>Be familiar with their devices and tools; be able to create digital teaching materials and conduct online teaching; be able to do effective online searches (being aware of copyright issues on images or videos). Engagement skills and knowledge of resources.</p>	<p>Need to: - transmit and be able to apply new teaching approaches - Know the tools and software available for teaching foreign languages - Know how to motivate and be flexible, setting up personalised courses.</p>	<p>Need to improve the teaching methodology focused on the use of digital for language teaching. Knowing how to make the best use of technology to interact and engage.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How to evaluate potentially useful platforms / tools - introduction to freely available teaching apps - programmes suited to particular activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – how to find help with technical issues/ how to discover extra features for programmes / apps in use. - keeping students engaged online - self-care while working online (physical, mental) - awareness of mental strains and how to avoid/minimise them Teaching materials: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - how to make material/adapt existing material quickly - where to find ready-made easily Student support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How to guide students through technical issues - Low tech solutions for those who don’t have access to many resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Need to establish working dynamics and ground rules. - Emotional intelligence. -Teachers need to know how to prepare each lesson -How to keep students' attention - Motivation and innovation techniques. -How data protection laws work and what is appropriate in online classes. - need to simplify their language so that students can understand better (communication is less fluid in online environments). -Self-care (mental and physical) and how to pass it on to students.

TABLE 3 – Digital teaching: Strengths highlighted

Different learning rhythms and styles are respected
Educational integration
Adaptation to students’ needs
Inclusive teaching
High degree of involvement
Active learning
Collaborative learning
Promotion of digital literacy
Possibility to bring languages to life with real-life connections
Ease of finding information
Flexibility of teaching methods
Distances between teachers and students are shortened
Less stress and greater commitment
Playful
Wide range of training materials available (videos, songs, audio text, etc)
Possibility to personalise your lessons and teaching methods

Table 4 – Digital teaching: Weaknesses highlighted

Physical problems caused by sitting for a long time
Connection problems
Social relationships are lost
Learners without digital skills and/or equipment risk being left behind
Body language loses importance
Less involvement of some pupils
More effort for educators to prepare and carry out the lesson
Difficulties for people with disabilities
Some teachers are still unprepared and reluctant to change their way of teaching

Lack of equipment and training for educators
Students get easily distracted
Struggle to keep private life separate from work
Shy students tend to be less committed

TABLE 5 – Training needs
Introduction to the different digital tools to be used in language teaching
Communication and relational skills
Time management
Empathy
Management of unforeseen events
Stress resistance
Self-care when teaching/learning digitally
Problem solving and resilience
How to conduct effective training lessons
Tools and software available: advantages and disadvantages
General overview of the use of social media for educational purposes
Apps: are they suitable for language teaching?
Basic and intermediate computer skills
How to edit audio/video resources
DigComp and DigCompEdu frameworks
Ways to integrate digital tools to make lessons more interactive and collaborative
Digital pedagogy
Technical troubleshooting: what to do?
Low-tech solutions for those who do not have access to many resources
Hybrid teaching tips: how to integrate online and frontal lessons

4.4.1. Detailed results from demi-structured interviews

Project partners summarised participant answers and reported on interview findings using the headings below. A detailed summary and analysis of their observations follows.

Semi structured interviews reporting template
Description of the sample
What is the current situation in your country, either at local or national level, with digitalisation in language teaching?
What are the main strengths—from teachers' and/or students' perspective—highlighted by the participants?
What are the main weaknesses—from teachers' and/or students' perspective—highlighted by the participants?
Examples of good practices
Online teaching before and after COVID-19: how has it changed?
Training needs
Reference, Bibliography, or additional sources mentioned (if any)

Description of the sample

AUSTRIA

Semi-structured interviews were carried out by both project partners in Austria, bit schulungcenter GmbH and Verein Österreichisches Sprachdiplom Deutsch – Verein ÖSD.

The experience and the working areas of the teachers and trainers who participated in our semi-structured interviews are very diverse. Some of them are newcomers to language teaching, others have many years of experience in it. As most of the experts have been working in different schools or institutions with people of different ages, they could offer insights into various fields. In addition, one of the participants also works as pedagogical director at an adult education provider.

Nationality	Role	Years of experience	Main workplace	Type of organisation
Austrian	Trainer and pedagogical director	6-9 years	Adult education provider and private trainer	Private
Austrian	Trainer	15-20 years	Adult education provider	Private
Austrian	Teacher	4-5 years	Secondary school	Public
Austrian	Trainer	6-9 years	Adult education provider	Private
Austrian	Teacher	1-3 years	Language school	Private
Other	Teacher, Translator, Manager	10-12 years	Language School	Private
Austria	Teacher	~ 20 years	Language School	University
Austria	Teacher, Manager	~ 15 years	Language School	Private
Other	Teacher	< 30 years	Language School	Private and state institution
Austria	Teacher, internal teacher trainings	12 years	Language School	Private

Austria	Teacher, Manager, Translator	~ 15 years	Language School	Private
Austria	Teacher	6 years	Language School	Private

ITALY

We conducted semi-structured interviews with experts in the field of foreign language teaching. Specifically, we interviewed one school headmistress and four language teachers (coming from primary and/or middle schools and university). From their words, great passion emerged, together with the will to change in order to “*give fuel*” to foreign language teaching within the Italian school system.

Nationality	Role	Years of experience	Main workplace	Type of organisation
Italian	Headmistress	>20	Nursery, Primary and Middle School	Public
Italian	Teacher	1-3 years	University	Private
Italian	Teacher	4-5 years	Bilingual school	Private
Italian	Teacher	>20	Primary school	Public
Italian	Teacher and trainer	>20	High school	Public

GREECE

Regarding the identity of people who participated in the semi-structured interviews some of them have a long-term experience in teaching a foreign language (over 15 years), others are newcomers at a junior level in teaching who gave a fresher point of view throughout the interviews. One of the participants is currently the owner of the teaching centre and a teacher simultaneously. All of them are currently working either in the private sector, namely in language centres or give lessons as private tutors (one-to-one tutoring). Their target group is mainly students aged 10-17, but there are some of the participants who are used to teaching children aged 3 to 8 and/or adults. Their educational background is mainly in English, French or German philology, namely the respective foreign language they teach. Hence, their teaching and pedagogical qualifications are at a very high level.

Nationality	Role	Years of experience	Main workplace	Type of organisation
Greek	Teacher	6-9	Language school	Private
Greek	Teacher	4-5	Language school	Private
Greek	Teacher	1-3	Private teacher	Private
Greek	Teacher	4-5	Language school	Private
Greek	Teacher	4-5	School	Private
Greek	Manager	>20	Language school	Private

FINLAND

Almost all of the teachers surveyed work in the public sector, which reflects where most language teaching takes place in Finland; private language schools are not very common here. Some of the sample also give private lessons alongside their main work. Given the long training period required to become a qualified language teacher here (5-6 years) and the difficulty of securing a place at university to begin with - many apply several years in a row before gaining a place - most of the interviewees are in the upper two age groups. Most are based in the larger urban areas of southern Finland, which reflects where most of the population, and schools, are to be found. The gender split is 3:5 male/female, which reflects the fact that women outnumber men in language teaching, especially in the comprehensive education system.

Nationality	Role	Years of experience	Main workplace	Type of organisation
Other	Project manager/consultant	6-9	Adult education provider	Public
Other	Teacher	10-14	Private teacher	Private
Finnish	Head of Language Dpt	15-19	Adult education provider	Public
Finnish	Language teacher	15-19	Adult education provider	Public

Finnish	Teacher	>20	School	Public
Finnish	Head of Language Dpt	10-14	Adult education provider	Public
Other	Teacher	15-19	School	Public
Finnish	Teacher	15-19	Adult education provider	Public

SPAIN

We have interviewed a range of different language teachers (English, Spanish as a second language, French.) working for state schools, private language schools and public language schools. They all have a different age range, years of experience and different levels of proficiency in the use of digital tools and computers in general.

Nationality	Role	Years of experience	Main workplace	Type of organisation
Spanish	Teacher	>20	Language school	Public
Spanish	Manager	10-14	School	Private
Spanish	Teacher	4-5	Language school	Private
Other	Teacher	10-14	Language school	Private
Spanish	Teacher	4-5	Language school	Private

Current situation

What is the current situation in your country, either at local or national level, with digitalisation in language teaching? (Please mention which resources, digital tools and technologies are in use to support and foster language teaching)

AUSTRIA

Before the COVID-19 crisis there were only a few teachers and trainers who included technology into their foreign language teaching. Blended learning settings or distance learning settings were hardly ever carried out, even though the technical prerequisites for them were mostly given in Austria. One big problem is that language teachers often still lack the digital skills they would need for online language teaching. They do not know any digital tools they could use or how tools are working. In addition, they do not have any experience in organizing digital teaching sessions and developing online learning materials. Furthermore, many teachers and trainers do not receive any suggestions, information or training from the institutions they are working in which makes the use of these tools even more difficult for educators.

The COVID pandemic has definitely helped to digitalize language teaching and digital learning settings are now offered more and more often. Many educators are recognizing that online teaching has many advantages and that using digital tools offers many possibilities for a more varied and motivating teaching. They commonly use some of the following tools in their language teaching: Teams, Zoom, BigBlueButton, Jitsy, Skype or Webex for communication and collaboration, YouTube for watching videos, Google Drive or Dropbox for sharing documents, PowerPoint for presentations or creating learning videos and also the learning platforms of their textbooks. In addition, many educators include games or online quizzes (e.g. Kahoot) as well as different whiteboards into their teaching settings in order to promote the motivation of their students.

ITALY

According to the interviewees, within the Italian school system, technology-based educational innovation has provided possibilities and opportunities that were unthinkable in the past. Most of our interlocutors agreed on the fact that such changes, to a certain extent, occurred in response to the COVID19 health emergency. Nevertheless, it is also true that schools and university institutions are still very far from integrating and understanding – both at a cultural and instrumental level – the very potential of digital tools to boost language teaching.

Yet people's way of life has changed and students have new needs, new training requirements and new learning opportunities. Therefore, the Italian school should adapt to such changes, embracing technological innovation. One headmistress specified:

“Broadly speaking, digital skills are crucial for schools and not only for language teaching. We started talking about IT in the 1990s with the so-called computer labs, but now our goal is to allow more widespread and immersive use of technology and IT throughout the school (...). Unfortunately, it is very common to have teachers with insufficient IT skills for effective use of digital within the teaching environment. A further boost was given by the pandemic and distance learning, which, however, caused bewilderment among many teachers.”

When it comes to using ICT, teachers should improve their methodological and technical skills both for their ordinary professional and teaching practice. Technological innovation does not automatically produce an improvement in the quality of teaching and learning if it is not supported by an internal reorganisation:

we need teachers who are motivated and prepared to use multimedial and innovative tools, but it is essential to invest time and resources in training. The “*paradigms of education*” should be updated and changed accordingly.

Digitisation does not involve equipping, for example, every student and teacher with a computer, but it means redesigning activities, taking into account the dynamics that technologies can trigger. Certainly, in order to change learning environments through digital technologies, investments are needed, including: a good network infrastructure, broadband internet connection and digital devices in classrooms and laboratories. In this case, we have to admit that in Italy the results obtained so far are - to date - "partially unsatisfying" as many differences between the various schools, both at regional and national level, can still be found. There is still a lot of work to be done.

All the speakers agreed on the extreme usefulness of using digital resources to let students experience languages “for real”.

Some have emphasised the usefulness of the Moodle platform, which perfectly adapts to language teaching, especially when combined with H5P, an open source framework used by educators and teachers to create interactive contents that enhance the learning experience, such as quizzes, games, videos, drag-and-drop activities and much more.

In distance learning, the teaching and learning activities should be planned to encourage interaction between participants and create collaborative learning processes. It is therefore necessary to know how to optimise school resources and how to organise and manage effective online sessions through the use of platforms, such as ZOOM, that enrich teaching and learning, improving student learning outcomes.

The Internet allows access to a great number of original language content, to select products in English or other idioms, with or without subtitles, so that the correct pronunciation can be heard and felt at all times. Our interviewees agree on the importance of watching and listening to videos in their original language and of "*opening the teacher's mind to the existence of YouTube*".

During the interviews, teachers mentioned several resources that can facilitate language teaching in a creative and collaborative way, allowing the user to create interactive presentations and info-Graphics with personalised content:

Kahoot

Padlet

Genially

Canva

WorldWall

Learning Apps

Lyrics Trainer

MusicMatch

Audacity

Sanako

“Usually when I teach I use apps like Padlet and Mentimeter for brainstorming. I also use Kahoot a lot, not to test students’ knowledge, but to ask them to create – in groups – interactive quizzes on a given topic. When each group presents the quizzes and the topic to the others, the students have not only used the language, but also they may correct each other, thus achieving a peer tutoring and peer review effect, and boosting creative thinking. Furthermore, I make my students use tools like Genially and Canva, or even Piktochart. (...) The language level, competence and fluency is not improved by doing (fruitless) grammar exercises, but by motivating the students to formulate questions in a certain way: what is more difficult,

even in Italian, is not answering questions, but asking them, and in this way the students become aware of their own learning process”.

GREECE

There is a broad consensus that the use of technology and multimedia for foreign language teaching has expanded rapidly, especially within this period of time, in Greece but also globally. Recent developments in the worlds of technology and the Internet have offered new and numerous opportunities for teaching and learning. Given that the majority of the target group of students consists nowadays of the e-generation who spent their entire lives surrounded by and using computers, videogames, digital music players, video cams, cell phones and other games and digital tools, teachers have been asked to rearrange and redesign the format of their language teaching and change the model of their pedagogy to fit the learning objectives to the students' needs. Living surrounded by a digital culture has had an effect on the way people learn. There is a consistent approach regardless of whether it is about nursery, primary, secondary education level students- to integrate digital tools and technologies in language teaching by using platforms to communicate like Zoom, Teams, Webex as well as tools to create learning units, activities regarding vocabulary, comprehension, and grammar, and also to use such tools for assessment matters (Life Worksheets). Of course, in terms of class level, each teacher makes use of specific digital tools. For instance, teachers integrate videos (Voocs, YouTube), animations, songs when teaching vocabulary, listening, and comprehension to children aged 3-11, whereas others use more interactive and collaborative digital tools such as whiteboards, learning apps when teaching secondary-level students and adults. All the participants agreed that there is already a strong initiative to develop and integrate more often digitization terms into foreign language teaching either in formal or informal education and is planning to further excel this and change their lessons either into a blended teaching format or in fully online. Finally, it is really important to mention that teachers working as private tutors or within language centres tend to use books of a digitized format where students can link to videos included in the book.

FINLAND

Finland has a well-developed digital network. High-speed internet is available in most places, including the more remote areas; only occasionally is mobile internet insufficient to allow live streaming of lessons. Smartphone penetration was 96% in 2020, rising to almost 100% in the under 24s; most people also have access to a computer or tablet. Comprehensive schools are well equipped with digital devices, which can be used in lessons: many local authorities provide students with their own personal laptop/pad for the duration of their schooling. Most students in post-secondary education have their own laptop. Those who do not have access to a device at home can use computers free of charge at their local library (although the Covid pandemic has restricted access somewhat).

Most classrooms have a computer, projector and sound system as standard; some also have smartboards/interactive whiteboards. With the move to online language teaching, cameras and microphones have been installed in many places, to allow livestreaming of lessons. Teachers use a variety of platforms, including Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Google Meet and Blackboard for running online lessons. For materials sharing and assignment returns they use Moodle, Edmodo, Google Classroom and a variety of internal platforms particular to their own institute. Some commented that it can be confusing having to change platform when working in different schools.

Teachers use a variety of digital tools for language teaching. Almost all use presentation software e.g. PowerPoint, and sharable digital documents such as Google Docs. Many use electronic teacher's material

(links to videos and listening exercises, interactive exercises and test banks) alongside traditional textbooks. Those who have access to interactive whiteboards have used them with students for vocabulary practice and other hands-on exercises. Favourite websites include padlet/Flinga (<https://padlet.com> / <https://flinga.fi/>) for brainstorming and Quizlet, Wordwall and Kahoot for online quizzes and practice. Some use online language learning classrooms such as Reactored (<https://sanako.com/reactored/>) and Sanako Connect (<https://sanako.com/connect/>), an online language laboratory. Almost all use videos in the target language from YouTube as well as other authentic content (songs, news and other programming) from target country websites.

SPAIN

Teachers in Spain are using more and more digital resources in language teaching. In schools they have been slowly implementing the use of whiteboards and protectors in the past few years and language teachers in general think digital resources are becoming more important in the classroom.

The main resources being used are Zoom and Google Meet for online classes and digital platforms (Moodle or Edmodo) to keep in touch with the parents of the children taking the lessons.

In class teachers use digital books (Cambridge Teacher), British Council, Google Drive, Kahoot, Quizizz, Bamboozle, YouTube videos and online games to support and foster language teaching.

Main strengths highlighted

What are the main strengths—from teachers' and/or students' perspective—highlighted by the participants? (Include here any reference to good practices implemented by the participants, positive messages about digital tools and facts related to digital technologies in language teaching)

AUSTRIA

For most of the participants of the interview it is a big chance to teach with digital tools as they are offering so many new possibilities. They mentioned a lot of strengths regarding this kind of teaching:

- many possibilities for a varied teaching and for responding to diversity; also the learners are grateful when there is a variety of materials and virtual tools or methods are very good and make the workday exciting
- different learning types (e.g. visual, auditory) and brain-based learning can easier be addressed
- educators and learners save time, they do not have to go to the educational center, they can sit comfortably at home
- by saving the travel time, teachers and trainers can invest more time in their courses or preparation work
- location independence of both educators and learners, connection of cultures, nations, people worldwide possible
- open learning is possible, students work more autonomously on the part of the students.
- work with videos, songs, audio texts and quizzes is possible
- possibility to record oneself and thus better promote the learners' pronunciation, also because the recordings can be listened to more often
- group work in breakout rooms is possible (much appreciated by students and they still want to keep it)
- integration of playful elements (e.g. Escape the Room).
- promotes digital literacy because digital media is embedded in normal classroom routines rather than as individual, compartmentalized units in the computer lab
- effective language time per student does not necessarily decrease, rather the opposite: you can organize discussions in breakout rooms, record or call each other, there are almost more possibilities than in face-to-face sessions (but students need to know how the tools work, this needs to be explained at the very beginning)
- possibility to work independently and without having to be present at a certain time; teachers can reach out to students who they usually wouldn't reach (e.g. due to sickness, working duties, etc.)
- possibility to access materials at any time, regardless where students are
- more discipline is needed (lesson planning)
- efficiency (e.g. share videos instantly)
- fosters learner autonomy
- Internet offers plenty of teaching material
- makes distance unimportant
- platforms (Moodle) allow students to always have an overview of what has been covered in class
- platforms allow teachers to monitor students' progress
- fosters oral communication/speaking training
- conserving resources: less paper is needed

ITALY

As mentioned above, using digital resources brings many benefits both to teachers and learners. Children can really experience a foreign language and, by being actively involved, they learn together with their peers and teachers. Learning takes place in a virtual, but highly interactive and collaborative context. The digital resources available, if well used, can be *‘the driving force behind language learning’*. And again, *“digital practices have a very strong appeal and are highly engaging even for those with perceptual and developmental difficulties. Languages must be seen and considered as alive, as a real tool for communication, and they should not simply be tested with grammar tests: grammar as an end in itself is useless if it is not transported into real life experiences”*.

The digital resources and tools are seen not as a necessity imposed by the health emergency; they represent an added value which, especially for language teaching, has to be exploited both in f2f and remote lessons. Once the COVID-19 has passed, new knowledge and competences acquired so far need to be maintained and further strengthened also within the classroom walls.

The benefits that language teachers and students can draw from the use of digital resources are countless: if well used, students follow the lesson with greater interest, participate, and enjoy speaking a foreign language. To do so, it is necessary to overcome *‘the fear of leaving behind familiar and beaten paths’*.

“As an introduction to my courses, for years I have been showing a short video by Ken Robinson entitled ‘Changing educational paradigms’, which explains in 10 minutes what I mean by school”.

According to Ken Robinsons: *“the current educational system was designed and conceived for a different age in the intellectual culture of the Enlightenment. (...). Our children are living in the most intensive and stimulating period in the history of the earth. They’re being besieged with information and coerced for attention from every platform: computers, from iPhones, from advertising hoardings, from hundreds of television channels. And we’re penalizing them now for getting distracted. From what? Boring stuff. At school, for the most part. We have to think differently about human capacity. We have to get over this old conception of academic, non-academic, abstract, theoretical, vocational... and see it for what it is, a myth. Second, you have to recognize that most great learning happens in groups, that collaboration is the stuff of growth”*.

Let's close this section by reiterating the importance of games and playfulness in the teaching environment:

“Teaching can be particularly fruitful if it is transformed in a playful sense. In some courses I’ve attended both in the USA and Spain I have noticed that the grammar topics were turned into games during the lesson (...) and each time I left these lessons with the feeling that I had really learned and made connections with the other participants. In one of these games, which aimed at learning new words and broadening our vocabulary, the teacher threw a ball and the student who caught it had to say the translation, and then threw the ball to another student who had to say a different word. If I think at my own classes with my students, this method can also be used for conjugated forms of the verb: the teacher “throws” an infinitive verb and each student has to mention a different conjugated form, without ever repeating themselves. This makes the lesson more interactive and fun, and the concepts can be easily remembered by the students. The same can be done with some apps or digital tools!”

“Gamification and the use of many game apps are perceived as a trivialisation of teaching and learning processes, but it is quite the opposite: they are important to motivate and engage learners!”

GREECE

A lot of strengths were mentioned and several positive messages were shared, although most of the participants confessed that in the beginning, they were hesitant to use any digital tools because they were thinking that they would lose their connection with the students and so they decided to stick to the old-teaching way. However, there were several strengths highlighted;

From the teachers' perspective it is mentioned that;

The time teachers require in order to gather authentic material is considerably reduced. In the early stages, the introduction of the Internet meant the possibility of creating online courses by uploading files as class-materials and sending emails in an attempt to achieve a similar teacher-student interaction as in face-to-face classes. However, nowadays the part that technology plays in education is not limited to this. The evolution in the role of technology in education is related to the development from distance learning to online learning. Besides this, teachers feel more flexible in arranging and designing their courses given that they do everything on their computers by means of the digital tools they use. That makes organisation, coordination and management of the material/ courses easier and flexible. Some of the teachers also are impressed because they realise that they make use and invest in a wide range of material and activities they didn't do before given that they now possess more and more tools and have access to more alternatives. One of these is the way they assess and give grades. By using a digital tool teacher feel more flexible and do their assessments quicker. That makes their work much easier and fun.

From the students' perspective

Students get more engaged and motivated when being involved in learning activities by means of such digital tools. This is something that teachers have observed that students have fun and like the interaction and collaboration chance they have with their classmates. Using digital tools make students get out of the cinema attitude they had when attending to the teacher's lecture. The lesson becomes more attractive given that technology draws the attention of students. They don't like writing on their own, they like to do an exercise via chat and communicate with their classmates and also they like to play games. That way makes learning more fun and experiential while students think that this more advanced and something quicker. Besides, students acquire and/or enhance their knowledge and digital competences and also familiarise themselves with digitalisation terms and functions alongside the learn a foreign language.

Moreover, digitalisation in teaching a foreign language contributes to keeping a balance between synchronous and asynchronous teaching and learning. In that, distance learning becomes a chance for those who live in a remote area. So, this contributes to students' efforts to solve time and space limitations of traditional face-to-face teaching. Teachers rely on technology as a medium to deliver courses, either fully online or as a complementary resource used with the aim of adapting learning to the needs of a new generation, the e-generation.

FINLAND

Digital tools in general:

- presentations allow for attractive well-organized exposition: visual reinforcement of oral input. activity instructions can be displayed for learners to check while doing the activity.
- access to real-life up-to-date material (YouTube, podcasts etc); a wider range of accents and speech patterns than in course resources. Important for showing the cultures of the target language countries too.
- Younger learners especially motivated by digital games and learning activities – feels like play, not study. Even older learners enjoy a change.
- Saves paper and copying time. Less need for physical resources
- visual reinforcement of teaching points, easy to show which exercise to go to/points to pay particular attention to.

Online language teaching in particular:

- suits some learners better: no need to travel to school: attendance/punctuality improved.
- Access to training more readily available to working people - can join from around the country; no travel time, so easier to attend training during the workday
- Learners report being less stressed and more relaxed when asked to contribute online.
- free from peer pressure / low self-esteem: more willing to engage with activities
- Allows learning to continue despite lockdowns.
- Easier to mix students /change groups: in classroom sometimes unwilling to leave their comfort zone; students have to engage with a range of different people, not just their friends.

SPAIN

They said that there are many advantages of using these resources:

- it provides safety (speaking about COVID-19), they feel more in control of the classes than at any previous point, it is very easy to share materials and the use of the digital whiteboard makes it very easy to explain concepts. Some consider that students have the same contact with the teachers and you can always use the private chat for more sensitive questions;
- They all mentioned being able to work from home as an advantage, they could have the whiteboard filled before starting the lesson and be more prepared for it;
- Using digital resources makes the class more dynamic and appealing to the students.

Main weaknesses presented

What are the main weaknesses—from teachers' and/or students' perspective—highlighted by the participants? (Include here any reference to difficulties and barriers encountered by the participants, including negative experiences and the lack of resources or knowledge)

AUSTRIA

The participants of the interview mentioned also many problems and challenges that come along with online foreign language teaching:

- health of the educators and learners: physical problems after a few hours in front of the computer (e.g. with their eyes or back), restrictions in activity
- preparation of online learning settings and materials are very time-consuming
- technical problems: bad internet connection, bad sound of microphones etc.
- social component is missing
- separation of work and private life is difficult
- only people with required skills for online teaching/learning can benefit from these settings
- communication between educators and learners or between the learners is more difficult, there is not always an eye contact, students' sense of responsibility decreases, people send mails and try to contact others around the clock
- explaining things with body language is not possible
- increased speaking time of educators because they have to explain everything in more detail and they always have to tell the learners that their microphone is muted or that they should turn on the camera; less net talk time for learners, so learners are not so much actively speaking
- difficult to involve all students because some are shyer online or they raise their hand and the educator does not notice that
- difficult to control what learners are really doing and how they are feeling during the lessons, some of them do not put on their camera
- difficult to see if learners have understood everything
- very exhausting for the educators because they must be permanently concentrated and focused, multitasking is needed
- students could be overwhelmed because they are not used to work independently
- especially in language teaching it is very important to have face-to-face meetings, to be able to use facial expression and gestures
- more difficult for people with limitations like hearing/speaking difficulties
- group work is more difficult in digital settings
- for beginners it is very important to have some things they can attack, e.g. game cards or other objects
- bad internet connection, lack of a quiet place (especially if many people live together in a – often – small flat)
- lack of technical skills (students and/or teachers)
- lack of technical equipment (students) – work only on their smartphones, which have too small displays for online teaching
- teachers need to be super flexible (e.g. type fast) – what is usually taken for granted can't be taken for granted in online teaching
- “human” aspect is missing

- some apps/websites require a registration – makes students struggle
- teachers tend to use too many tools at once
- teachers and students need to be willing to engage with new stuff
- questions of data protection
- teacher doesn't see students' facial expressions
- teaching big groups becomes even more difficult
- bonding is more difficult
- online teaching requires better/more detailed lesson planning, teachers can't be as spontaneous as when teaching in a classroom
- students let lessons wash over them
- students more easily get side tracked

ITALY

In Italy, in some schools the digital transfer of language teaching is slowed down by the lack of appropriate digital and instrumental resources (internet connection, computers and software, etc). Sometimes you would like to make some changes, but you cannot!

However, the main causes are 1) the lack of knowledge and/or competences of the teaching staff when it comes to the digital world and 2) resistance to change due to the "fear of leaving familiar paths and abandoning old habits".

As one school headmistress stressed out, the real *“obstacle to full digitisation comes from the lack of passion(...). Training cannot be imposed as it requires lively interest, and constant practice (...). Some teachers are reluctant to be trained and always ask: is it compulsory? (...) People make the difference in schools”*.

On the other hand, children are eager to use the technology: using digital technology to learn languages stimulates and involves them even more.

“What I strive the most for as a teacher and trainer is to involve the pupils in creating their own multimedia products through the use of apps. For example, Kahoot is generally used by my colleagues to create quizzes to test students' knowledge, but for me the final aim for the students would be to teach them how to consciously use those tools to not only enhance their language skills, but also to boost their digital competences. If we use these tools only to test them, the effect would be the opposite and this is one of the main weaknesses of our system”

According to one of the teachers, one of the main problems is that the teaching methodology is often caged by the strictness of the ministerial programmes and syllabus.

“Two years ago, I decided to finish the grammar book by the end of the fourth year (high school) as, for the final year, I wanted to show my students the "real" English that is used in the real world to communicate and I planned several simulations, exploiting the digital tools at our disposal. Due to personal reasons, I was then replaced by another teacher, who panicked when she saw the students had no book. I expected her to give free rein to her imagination deciding her own program, making the best out of the digital tools at her disposal but, unfortunately, this was not the case.”

GREECE

However, some weaknesses have also been highlighted. Below are noted the most important ones that may have a huge impact on the use of digital tools in foreign language teaching:

- Poor internet connection as a barrier where neither students nor teachers can work.
- Some language centres do not provide teachers/ students with proper digital affordances which does not help teachers to be creative and integrate digital tools in their teaching.
- Activities by means of digital tools take some time. Teachers say that they don't use several digital activities when teaching at the language centre because they have not so much time whereas private teachers have a more flexible schedule and prefer integrating digital tools within their one-to-one tutoring.
- Poor Communication between students and teachers when using digital tools. Teachers confess that it's difficult to checking the body language of the students so as to realise how to approach and convince their students. Digitalisation cannot replace the communication with the students in the class. In this regard, students are not free to express themselves yet via a digital tool. And learning a language is about expressing and communicating that makes it dysfunctional.
- Some students deal with difficulties in using such digital tools and do not know how to solve technical problems. Hence, students may feel disengaged and overwhelmed.
- High Distraction level; students may lose the meaning of the learning activity they are doing in case the focus only on playing they game (e.g., digital tool). So, the boundaries between teaching/learning and having free and fun time are too close. Therefore, the instruction in such tools need to follow the learning principles and multimedia principles so students to join a fruitful and constructive learning journey in foreign language.

FINLAND

Teachers:

- Classroom tech: problems using unfamiliar systems (logging on, managing sound systems and projectors...); need to sign in too many different websites to access class materials – can be time consuming at the start of a lesson. Regular computer updates mean that system often changes. (e.g. hyperlinks on Edge often blocked)
- E-resources often hard to use; resources for the same lesson not always grouped together
- Sometimes hard to strike a balance between tech and learning; when does tech enhance learning, and when does it distract from it?
- inclusion of students who struggle with tech
- often time consuming to identify suitable resources from so much on the internet
- need to learn to use different platforms
- need for contingency plans when technology doesn't work (own or others')

Online teaching:

- time taken to remind students to switch on microphone/camera; harder to ensure interactive learning
- lack of contact with students: hard to read body language and other non-verbal signals

- harder to engage less active students; need to check regularly
- setting up group work online takes time, especially when you need students in a particular group
- students in small group rooms can stray from the task/not engage actively – harder to manage
- difficulties in monitoring progress when all working on their own or in group rooms
- Extra time needed to create / convert resources into ones that can be used online; teaching approach needs to change
- Lesson planning and organization has to be spot-on before uploading materials
- Much time spent managing technology and helping students with technical issues; less on the actual teaching
- Sitting in front of a screen for hours with no chance to move around – tough on eyes and body
- No chance for kinaesthetic reinforcement / physical practice
- examinations and testing hard when students have access to e.g. online translators / dictionaries
- participation on mobile phones – limit the materials that can be accessed
- distraction of chat messages while speaking; easy to send messages to the wrong people if not careful

Manager: takes a lot of time to brief teachers on the platforms in use in school

Students:

- Lack of contact with teacher and classmates
- Uncomfortable with having camera on in online lessons
- Tech issues; problems joining class and working through assignments
- Difficulties focusing when there are so many other things to distract online
- fatigue when in front of a computer all the time
- no sense of a different activity during/after the workday (adult learners)

SPAIN

The main obstacles mentioned are the economic resources to fittingly equip the schools.

For some of the students it is difficult to access a computer or tablet to be able to join the lessons and the digital resources.

The most senior teachers interviewed mentioned that it is more difficult for them to adapt to teaching with digital resources because they are not used to using computers in this way. It is complicated and time consuming to upload your materials to the Cloud, they feel the interaction with the students is not as good as with face-to-face lessons and it is very frustrating to deal with students who won't use their cameras.

Another problem here in Spain is the internet connection, our infrastructure is slowly improving but far from the best, so it's common to have to deal with connection problems and the occasional power cut.

Example of good practices

Describe briefly the examples, giving a short description and including links, if any

AUSTRIA

In the interviews many good practice examples of digital tools were mentioned. For conducting online teaching sessions, the tool Microsoft Teams was mentioned by some experts because of the possibilities to use breakout rooms, the chat or the whiteboard. They also referred to Zoom and especially to Webex which is a very simple tool and also offers many different functions for collaboration. In their language teaching they often use videos, e.g. the students have to watch videos on YouTube or they have to make their own videos. Tools to create videos are for example Powtoon, LOOM or PowerPoint. One trainer explained that she wants her students to record themselves when they pronounce some vocabulary or when they make a presentation so that they listen to the recording again and reflect on it. Another trainer said that he uses the camera of the laptop to show his students different objects at home (e.g. kitchen utensils) and teach them vocabulary. For sharing documents, it was recommended to use Google Drive or Dropbox, especially for learners who are not so digitally fit as these tools are very simple to use. Also, free platforms of schoolbook publishers are used very often, e.g. from Schubert Verlag because they offer additional information and exercises for various contents. To motivate the learners, many different tools were mentioned. One of the most-known tools is Kahoot. Students and educators like it because of the simple and colourful user interface. In addition, Quizlet or Learning Apps were mentioned.

But one thing which was mentioned by more participants was that the choice of which tools to use should be made by the educators themselves as everyone has different preferences.

YouTube was also mentioned as it gives learners access to authentic language (no didactic material; subtitles available).

ITALY

One teacher told us she made great use of YouTube videos for her classes and she mentioned one interesting project she carried out a few years ago with primary students. The students were involved in an after-school workshop on robotics and coding and were using a colourful bee-shaped robot, known as Bee-Bots. Inspired by a similar project in the USA, the English teacher decided to make video tutorials with her classes where the students explained in English how the robot worked. She stressed out the importance of creating new videos in English rather than just watching them.

Furthermore, one of our interviewees suggested an extremely interesting teaching methodology that we think is worth reflecting on.

The **Padagogy Wheel** is designed to help educators think – systematically, coherently, and with a view to long term, big-picture outcomes – about how they use mobile apps in their teaching. The Padagogy Wheel is all about mindsets; it's a way of thinking about digital-age education that meshes together concerns about mobile app features, learning transformation, motivation, cognitive development and long-term learning objectives. Such a tool takes into account Bloom's Taxonomy, social and emotional learning, Ruben Puentedura's SAMR model (Substitution, Augmentation, Modification and Redefinition) and motivation.

GREECE

There were plenty of good practices mentioned such as the use of YouTube videos and songs when teaching children aged 3 to 6 as a check-in of the lesson or when learning a new letter in the foreign language. Others use videos and digital storytelling followed by questions relevant to what students watched and listened to when teaching students of primary and secondary education aiming at revising vocabulary, grammar and practicing on listening and comprehension. Besides, more good practices were mentioned and discussed and it was impressive because teachers found some patterns regarding the digital tools they use. That means that teachers' needs are mostly similar and the digital tools that are currently in a broad use cover their needs. Such good practices/ patterns are as follow:

- **Quizlet.** By means of this digital tool teachers create language flashcards with terms that students have to learn and on the back side they mention the translation and an example related to the mentioned term from real life. Diagrams and study guides can also be created by means of this tool. In that, students are able to memorize important terms, definitions, vocabulary, conjugations and grammar rules. This way is fruitful when students have to revise the subject or master a new one. (<https://quizlet.com>)
- **Live Worksheets.** This platform allows teachers to transform their traditional printable worksheets (doc, pdf, jpg...) into interactive online exercises with self-correction, which is called "interactive worksheets". Students can do the worksheets online and send their answers to the teacher. This is good for the students (it's motivating), for the teacher (it saves time) and for the environment (it saves paper). Additionally, such interactive worksheets take full advantage of the new technologies applied to education: they may include sounds, videos, drag and drop exercises, join with arrows, multiple choice... and even speaking exercises, that the students must do using the microphone. Teachers can use live worksheets to make their own interactive worksheets or they can use the ones shared by other teachers. The platform includes a collection of thousands of interactive worksheets that cover lots of languages and subjects. Then, students are able to open the worksheet, do the exercises and click "Finish". Then they choose "Send my answers to the teacher" and enter teacher's email (or secret keycode). Then the teacher gets a notification in their email, and checks all the students' answers. There is no limit on the number of worksheets that students can send to the teacher, but all their answers will be deleted after 30 days. Otherwise, teachers can make their own interactive workbooks, and add their favourite worksheets (their own ones or shared by other teachers). The teacher can check students work at any time, assign homework and add comments or notes. Interactive workbooks are highly customizable, allow teachers' feedback and save all your students' answers for unlimited time. For these reasons they are teacher's favourite option, although it takes more time at the beginning. However, teachers make some remarks such as that they cannot change the grade range. For instance, this platform gives the possibility to teachers to correct students' answers automatically and the used range of grade is 100. However, each teacher and each language centre follow a different range, be it 20/ 40/ 100, as a result teacher cannot change the range. (<https://www.liveworksheets.com>)
- **LearningApps.** Teachers use this digital tool when introducing a new concept/ topic in the foreign language. This is a Web 2.0 application, to support learning and teaching processes with small interactive modules. Those modules can be used directly in learning materials, but also for self-studying. The aim is to collect reusable building blocks and make them available to everyone.

Blocks (called Apps) include no specific framework or a specific learning scenario. The blocks are therefore not suitable as complete lessons or tasks, instead they must be embedded in an appropriate teaching scenario. For instance, teachers can create two images relevant to the concept/ terms and students need to drag and drop to complete the concept or a sentence. (<https://learningapps.org/about.php>)

- **Wordwall.** It's a really nice digital tool where teachers can create their own activities or custom the existing ones for their classrooms. This contains quizzes, match ups, word games like wordsearch, crossword, and diagrams, open the box, speed the wheel activities. Teachers use such activities in regard to the age and level of the students for grammar and vocabulary purposes. For example, when it is about students of proficiency level, teachers prefer to create and/or custom activities which integrate digital games given that students of that age are more familiar. (<https://wordwall.net>)

FINLAND

- Use of cards on **Wordwall** or **Quizlet** to provide conversation prompts (more advanced groups) or vocab/grammar practice (less advanced) (<https://quizlet.com/login?redir=https://quizlet.com/latest> <https://wordwall.net/>)
- Reading comprehension – easy to build own quiz questions in e.g. Google Classroom/Edmodo – can be marked automatically
- Collaborative working for students on e.g. essays / presentations in Google Docs
- Vocabulary practice for individuals on quizlet etc.
- Many ESL worksheets can be completed online and returned to the teacher: (<https://en.islcollective.com/english-esl-worksheets/search>)
- Online language lab - teacher can upload audio for students to listen and repeat or a basic recorder for students to record themselves. Pair and group work also possible. (<https://sanako.com/connect/>)
- Regular exercise breaks and physical prompts (e.g. <https://practices.learningaccelerator.org/artifacts/brain-break-would-you-rather-energizer-game-1>) or gonoodle

SPAIN

All the interviewed teachers encourage their students to watch audio-visual products, such as films or TV series in original language and subtitles if needed (preferably in original language, depending on the level). It is a great practice for language and also cultural immersion.

Using songs, videos and games to support the lessons and you can always use the resources available online and shared by other teachers (maybe show how to access to content created by other teachers?).

Encouraging the students to use mobile learning apps, as they reinforce the acquisition of vocabulary.

Online teaching before and after COVID-19

How has it changed?

AUSTRIA

All participants were of the opinion that a lot has changed because of COVID. Before the pandemic, most teaching was conducted offline and within educational institutions. Online teaching was rarely carried out and many teachers and trainers did not have the required competences or the motivation to conduct online classes. But through COVID, educators did not have any choice and they had to change their teaching. It was mentioned that acquiring new skills and collecting digital learning materials was/is a challenge and very time-consuming, but some of the participants also added that this change was a big advantage as online teaching is offering many new possibilities for the educators as well as the learners. Most online settings are working very well. But the success with online teaching does not depend on the age of educators, it is much more about their personality. If educators are open, curious and flexible, if they are able to adapt their teaching materials and if they provide some training for the use of the online tools to their learners, online teaching can be a very good thing. But therefore, it is also important to give educators the possibility to enhance their digital and social skills, so that they can conduct these online teaching settings successfully.

In the future, a hybrid form of teaching (online + offline) seems likely.

ITALY

Progress in the digitisation of teaching methods has also been driven by the COVID 19 and by the following adaptation processes. Compulsory distance learning has contributed to accelerating knowledge and skills in the digital field as teachers have been “forced” to use digital platforms. Several participants mentioned that, at the beginning of the pandemic, many teachers panicked as they had no idea on how to teach online.

COVID-19 outbreak has pushed the whole Italian education system to take a step forward, but inequalities are also emerging: several children and young people have difficulties in following online lessons, and the same applies to their families in supporting them. These inequalities may have socio-economic or socio-cultural grounds: some families have encountered and still have difficulties in providing students with the necessary tools (laptop, stable internet connection, etc).

On the other hand, some teachers, especially those who were against technology, felt “forced” to use it without having proper digital preparation.

There are however still some teachers who do not understand the potential of technology.

GREECE

Before Covid-19 digitalisation into classrooms and the use of digital tools was something unknown and unfamiliar for most of the teachers of foreign language. The majority followed the old-fashioned approach of teaching and perhaps they could make use of interactive whiteboards, videos on YouTube if the language

centre or school provided teachers with such affordances. Given the Covid-19 impact, teachers were asked to make the transition from the face-to-face to the online way of teaching. In the beginning, all of them- regardless the age of the teachers- participants- were hesitant but then they get more experienced and familiar with the digital tools and the digital way of teaching given that they accepted the benefits of digitalisation in teaching of foreign languages. Teachers become more creative by customizing or creating from the scratch the learning material by means of digitization and feel more innovative. It seems that teachers view digital tools but also online teaching as an alternative way now. Finally, there is a broad consensus that the impact of the transition from the face-to-face to the online way of teaching was higher on children's behaviours, where teachers observed a lower willingness from children part to participate and engage in the online course, whereas adults accepted the new online norm of teaching directly while depicting a positive attitude.

FINLAND

For most teachers, online teaching was rare before the pandemic. Now it is a regular event: for many - especially teachers of older students (14+) - it is the only teaching they have done for the past year. The switch to online teaching was a shock and brought technical struggles for many; but most problems have now been ironed out and most teachers say they feel confident teaching online. Nevertheless, the majority of teachers would prefer to return to the classroom, feeling that language learning in particular needs direct human contact and interaction if it is to be effective. Some courses are however still likely to stay online even after restrictions end.

SPAIN

Some teachers said that it has radically changed the way of teaching, as we have swapped from traditional lessons to fully digital ones, but others told us that what COVID has done is simply make it happen more quickly, as the schools were already getting prepared (slowly) to use digital resources anyway.

Training needs

Please mention whether the target group interviewed felt the need to join a training course to improve or enhance their digital, social, and personal skills

AUSTRIA

All experts agreed that educators need additional competences in order to conduct successful online teaching sessions. Some of them said that a training for educators would be very important, so that they can enhance their digital and social skills and get an overview of different tools, especially as we all need these competences at work as well as in private life. Others mentioned that nowadays it is common to use digital tools, so it is not that important to provide any training in this area. Nevertheless, “older generation” of teachers needs training regarding the handling of tools/platforms. Many complained that trainings are not very helpful and barely scratch the surface, so there is the need to focus on the quality and not quantity.

Those who said that training would be important, mentioned that in relation to digital skills there is the need to show educators an overview of different tools they could use in their teaching and also how they work. Furthermore, knowledge about digital method variety, control of the digital learning progress or developing online learning materials including self-explanatory tasks is needed. In relation to social and personal skills the following competences should be enhanced: communication skills, relationship building, time management, stress resistance, resilience, patience, problem solving, empathy, ability to guide people, thinking out of the box, flexibility, dealing with disruptions.

The competence frameworks DigComp and DigCompEdu are not known by the participants.

ITALY

During the interviews some interesting ideas on how to structure a training course emerged. Some suggested training the target group on how to hold effective lessons. The importance of active learning, self-study and peer-learning was stressed. The teaching methodology should go beyond the concept of frontal lessons, putting students at the centre of learning processes.

Teachers should not confuse means and ends: the aim is not to *"learn how to use the computer"*, because the computer is a means, whereas the real aim is to develop communication skills and critical thinking.

Some participants feel the need to join a training course aimed at understanding how to use the great variety of Apps and tools at our disposal, with a specific focus on digital citizenship and the SDGs. The course should also offer a general overview on the use of social media for educational purposes.

As far as digital skills are concerned, our interviewees claimed they feel the need to be trained on the variety of resources that are available online (especially the ones dedicated to language teaching) and would like to know how to choose properly according to their needs. They stressed out that they do not know the full potential of the technological tools available, they have these resources but, unfortunately, they make limited use of them.

The Pedagogy Wheel, DigComp and DigCompEdu are considered key topics to be addressed, which are still unknown to the teaching staff. Such European frameworks could help to: design and integrate digital

tools and resources into teaching processes; manage and arrange digital educational resources appropriately; test and develop new pedagogical approaches. One of the participants proposed to introduce the Apps and online tools not as the main topic of the module, but as a transversal tool to deliver knowledge.

Furthermore, basic computer skills should not be taken for granted. Teachers need to know how to edit/cut/adjust/extract audio and video resources according to their needs, or also how to create new resources from scratch. A focus on audio/video formats and how to modify them could be included. Lastly, teachers should know how to add subtitles to the video resources they found to make them more understandable for their students, using free and user-friendly softwares.

It was then suggested to add specific modules dedicated to *lateral thinking*, *empathy* and tips on *how to conduct effective lessons online*.

Returning to the **DigComp** and **DigCompEdu frameworks**, such frameworks are not very well known by the teachers and managers who took part in our interviews. Most of them never heard the frameworks before, while others knew the term, but only in a very broad and general way.

All respondents believe that teacher professionalism is related to collaborative learning, instructional design and networking. Seeing the teachers as "designers of learning environments", innovation in teaching practices can be considered as a typical aspect of the teaching profession to solve daily challenges in an ever-changing context. The DigCompEdu European framework could help to: design and integrate digital tools and resources within the teaching processes; manage and handle digital teaching and education appropriately; test and develop new pedagogical approaches.

For such reasons, our interviewees agreed on the fact that a specific module on the abovementioned frameworks may be needed.

GREECE

Each teacher is open to join a training course aiming to improve mainly their digital skills given that nowadays they are working more often on creating instructions by means of several digital skills. However, most of them claim that they have already participated in such training programs and seminars but they were not satisfied since the training addressed very basic digital skills, matters that teachers can acquire by attending self-directed tutorials as they already exist within each website of digital tools as a support material. What the teachers lack is to get a deeper grounding on inclusive instructions (beginning, medium, wrap-up) and ways to integrate digital tools so as to make the lesson more interactive and collaborative. All in all, they are open to joining a training course given that through these courses teachers learn how to use something to grow themselves professionally but also how to apply such ways for a more constructive to the students learning journey.

FINLAND

Most Finnish teachers feel confident in their basic digital skills, but would be interested in training aimed at improving learner engagement and ensuring that technology enhances learning, instead of distracting from it. The need for improved digital pedagogy skills is stressed by many.

Self-care, both physical and mental, is another important area they would like to see covered. e.g. exercises and solutions to prevent physical problems – for both the teachers themselves and for the learners that they engage with.

Some concrete suggestions for the training course (all emphasized the need for PRACTICAL hands-on guidance and concrete examples):

- using Presentations and Forms in teaching/ testing
- introduction to different teaching platforms – advantages and disadvantages; basic use and where to find help (e.g. Moodle, Teams, classroom)
- different apps and what can be done with them. Which programmes are suitable for which activities? Step by step instructions for basic operation: some demonstration of what else is possible, and where to find more support later
- how to make material and where to find ready-made easily
- where to go for advice – how to find help with technical issues/ how to discover extra features for programmes / apps in use
- low tech solutions for those who don't have access to many resources
- hints for hybrid teaching: how to integrate students online with those in the classroom
- how to create personal rapport online: approaches to online pedagogy
- pedagogical approach to online teaching – especially tips and tricks for keeping students engaged online

SPAIN

They all remark the need for easy-to-use apps (for the teachers but also for the students and their parents), and that there is always room for improving the digital skills.

How to upload contents to the online platform, how to make communication fluid, as if it were a face-to-face lesson. How to use all the options that are available already (on Zoom, for example, how to create polls and everything that is not the basic sharing screen function or the digital whiteboard).

How the teachers should present themselves online. Maybe how to use filters with the camera so the students are confident to use the camera.

Additional resources

Reference, bibliography, citations or additional sources mentioned (if any)

AUSTRIA

- <https://www.powtoon.com/>
- <https://www.loom.com/>
- Memorize (app)
- Quizlet (app)
- Learning App
- Padlet (App)
- H5P
- Leo
- Jiset
- Dashboard
- Blackboard Collaborate
- Google Talk
- Google Meet
- Lyricstraining.com

ITALY

- <https://www.teachthought.com/technology/the-pedagogy-wheel/>
- **Teaching Effectively with Zoom – A Practical Guide to Engage Your Students and Help Them Learn (2020) – Dan Levy**

GREECE

- <https://wordwall.net>
- <https://learningapps.org/about.php>
- <https://www.liveworksheets.com>
- <https://openeducation.gr/EEK/voocs>

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Zoom: <https://zoom.us/>
Microsoft Teams: <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoft-teams/group-chat-software>
Google Meet: <https://meet.google.com/#>
Blackboard: <https://www.blackboard.com/en-eu>
Moodle: <https://moodle.org/>
Edmodo: <https://new.edmodo.com/>
Google classroom: <https://edu.google.com/intl/en/products/classroom/>
Padlet: <https://padlet.com/>
Flinga: <https://flinga.fi/>
Quizlet: <https://quizlet.com/en-gb>
Wordwall: <https://wordwall.net/>
Kahoot: <https://kahoot.com/>
Reactored: <https://sanako.com/reactored/>
Sanako Connect: <https://sanako.com/connect/>
ISL collective: <https://en.islcollective.com/english-esl-worksheets/search>)
<https://practices.learningaccelerator.org/artifacts/brain-break-would-you-rather-energizer-game-1>)
gonoodle: <https://www.gonoodle.com/>

SPAIN

- https://go.edmodo.com/teachers/?lang=es&utm_source=main&utm_medium=visitor-site&utm_content=nav-bar
- <https://www.thecambridgeteacher.es/dashboard>
- <https://create.kahoot.it>
- <https://drive.google.com>
- <https://learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org>

4.4.2. Detailed Results from Focus Groups

Using the same template as before, partners summarised the results obtained in this third phase. Their results are set out below.

Description of the sample

AUSTRIA				
Nationality	Role	Years of experience	Main workplace	Type of organisation
Austrian	Teacher	15-19 years	Adult education provider	Private
Austrian	Teacher	10-14 years	Adult education provider	Public
Austrian	Language expert	>20	Other institution	Public
Austrian	Teacher	5 years	Adult education provider	Public
Austrian	Teacher & examiner	4 years	Adult education provider	Public & private
Austrian	Teacher	20 years	Adult education provider	Public
Austrian	Teacher	20 years	Adult education provider	Public & private
Austrian	Teacher	6 years	Adult education provider	Public & private
Austrian	Translator & teacher	4 years	Adult education provider	Public & private

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Nationality	Role	Years of experience	Main workplace	Type of organisation
Italian	Headmistress	6-9 years	Nursery, Primary and Middle School	Public
Italian	Headmistress	6-9 years	High School	Public
Italian	Teacher and Translator	>20	University	Private
Italian	Teacher	1-3 years	University	Private
Italian	Translator	4-5 years	N/A	Freelancer
Other	VR/AR Teacher	10-14 years	N/A	Private company
Italian	L2 Teacher	10-14 years	N/A	NPO

GREECE

Nationality	Role	Years of experience	Main workplace	Type of organisation
Greek	Teacher	4-5	Language school	Private
Greek	Private teacher	1-3	N/A	N/A
Greek	Teacher	4-5	School	Private
Greek		1-3	Language school	Private

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Nationality	Role	Years of experience	Main workplace	Type of organisation
Other	Private teacher	15-19	N/A	N/A
Other	Language expert	10-14	Adult education provider	Public
Finnish	Language expert	15-19	Adult education provider	Public
Finnish	Teacher	>20	School	Public

SPAIN

Nationality	Role	Years of experience	Main workplace	Type of organisation
Prefer not say	Teacher	15-19	Language school	Private
Prefer not say	Teacher	6-9	Language school	Private
Prefer not say	Manager/owner	15-19	Adult education provider	Private
Prefer not say	Manager/owner	6-9	Language school	Private
Prefer not say	Manager/owner	10-14	Language school	Private
Prefer not say	Teacher	6-9	Language school	Private

Current situation

What is the current situation in your country, either at local and national level, with digitalisation in language teaching? (Please mention which resources, digital tools and technologies are in use to support and foster language teaching)

AUSTRIA

All focus group participants have been teaching languages for several years. Due to the Corona pandemic, there has been a large shift to online teaching since last year, which is challenging for both teachers and learners. The participants, however, have now become accustomed to it, and have also developed certain routines. In this respect, two participants mentioned that a lot has been done in their workplaces to provide learners with good facilities for online teaching. One participant, for example, said that learners are even provided with the necessary devices if they do not possess them. Tools used by teachers and students are, for example, Microsoft Teams, Jitsi, Skype, Zoom or Padlet. Quizlet or LearningApps are often utilized to create exercises or quizzes. Many organisations prefer the platform Moodle, which is seen as beneficial. In addition, online offers from textbook publishers are often put to use as well.

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The participants in the focus group came from different backgrounds in terms of their responsibilities and the geographical area in which they work. They are managers, teachers and freelancers, all experienced in teaching languages to learners of different ages.

We would like to begin with reporting what one of the participants told us because, in our point of view, it well summarises the general opinion: *“technology has been part of my life for a very long time, and in recent years I have seen how useful it is as a teacher as well (...). The pandemic has further strengthened the use of these technologies, but I have found out that our digital competence remains one of the lowest, compared to other European countries”*. According to a OECD report (*Skills Outlook 2019 – Thriving in a Digital World*), Italy is still far behind when it comes to digital skills, and this backward position should be an incentive to engage more and more learners and teachers in entering the digital world.

The usefulness of using technology to provide and improve language skills and knowledge was highly recognised, but in our country the process is still slowed down by technical (connection and availability of tools and devices) and cultural reasons (resistance to embracing a different teaching methodology):

“The problem is that the use of technology is not well established, teachers are often older, they have difficulties in interacting with this world, and not everyone wants to be trained”.

COVID-19 outbreak was also mentioned: the health emergency helped to give a boost and give space to different ways of teaching: *“we created a VR lab, where students have the chance to both learn English and*

create their own content, increasing their awareness as well. I have been using Virtual Reality for a long time to improve students' language skills, but also in the work environment and it works!"

There are now many tools and platforms that break the traditional patterns of teaching, pushing for informal learning and, in the last year, more and more social media channels and pages have been created to teach foreign languages.

There is now a lot of emphasis on spontaneous language acquisition and "full immersion" to learn the language, but this acquisition needs to be clearly structured: everything we find on social networks and platforms is useful for exposure, or for improvement if the learner already has a good command of that language.

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The participants agreed that there was a fairly rapid growth in the use of digital media. Most digital tools were already available in the past, but due to the pandemic that forced language teachers to resort to distance learning, they became much more widely used. They cannot replace lifelong teaching, but they proved to be valuable allies in their lessons.

The main tools mentioned are online course meetings, the use of electronic documents with the ability to interact with the user, videos (mainly songs for younger ages), electronic tests and emails.

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Note: given that most courses have primarily been online since March 2020, the discussion focused mostly on the experience of language teaching online. Use of technology in the classroom situation was not really considered, although there was a brief discussion of how to bring some of the technology currently in use online into the classroom when face to face teaching resumes sometime in the future.

Infrastructure: Overall satisfaction with the state of digital infrastructure in Finland. All teachers have access to fast broadband and are able to teach from home when needed: some also use mobile internet to teach from elsewhere, e.g. summer cottage; speeds are fast enough to allow this to go ahead without problems, even in more remote areas.

Equipment in schools

Teachers generally are satisfied with the equipment available in schools: almost all rooms have desktop computer, projector and sound system; some also have interactive whiteboards available. Access to Wi-Fi and computer password is sometimes a problem for those who work in different schools; computer updates

when turned on can also cause difficulties. Many prefer to use their own laptop, where all material and websites are easily accessed, but not all teaching rooms allow for this – although the situation is improving fast.

Equipment at home: Freelancers have to provide their own equipment; those in full-time work usually get a laptop and possibly other equipment (monitor, mouse etc) from their employer; one employer also made work chairs available for home working. A couple prefer to continue to teach from their normal workplace because of the better equipment and space available there.

Student equipment: One of the biggest complaints: all reported problems with the equipment some students have available, and their ability to use it. Problems to be expected with the older generation, but some young people also struggle and need extra support. Audio connections represent a particular problem for some (no/inadequate headphones etc.)

Other government support: Tax allowances for home workspace, internet connection and equipment purchase are very welcome, especially in this year of self-isolation.

Digital tools and technologies

Meeting tools: Zoom, Teams, Blackboard, Google Meet, BigBlueButton, GoToMeeting. Tools used decided largely by the employing institute, although in some places teachers can decide for themselves what tools to use. Some organisations still refuse to use zoom on security grounds, although most teachers preferred this system as it allows for easy group work, messaging and collaboration tools. All tools have pluses and minuses.

Online learning environments. Moodle, Google Classroom (Edmodo). Moodle is most widely used as it is the learning environment designated by many institutions. Teachers felt that it is a good system, but requires a certain amount of practice – for both students and teachers – before it can be used smoothly. Google classroom is more intuitive but permits only a limited range of activities.

Teaching tools

Presentations- PowerPoint/Slides

Self-created worksheets: Word etc.

Flashcards and games: Quizlet, Wordwall, Kahoot

Electronic teacher's material with course books (online exercises, videos, audio, test banks): but some editions not very user friendly, with material arranged by type sooner than by limit: can need many hours of organisation before it is ready to use.

Brainstorming / feedback: Padlet, flinga, Miro, Jamboard and similar

Online quizzes and vocabulary practice: Quizlet, Wordwall, Kahoot, Google forms, Edmodo quizzes etc

Authentic material online: very much valued for cultural content as well as linguistic input- although it can be time consuming to identify appropriate material at the appropriate level.

Authentic material: videos – YouTube, Vimeo, Ted Talks, local TV channels

Authentic material: listening – podcasts, local radio channels, songs

Authentic material: reading: online news websites and newspapers in target language, Project Gutenberg, online libraries

Language learning classrooms e.g. Reactored (<https://sanako.com/reactored/>)

Online language laboratory e.g. Sanako Connect (<https://sanako.com/connect/>)

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From the point of view of private academies, it is fairly updated, as since the lockdown started they had to reinvent themselves and try to give the best possible experience to their students. Also, the managers are amazed that after a full year of teaching online, teachers are still constantly looking for new resources to make their classes successful. The public schools, on the other hand, seem to be a lot behind in the digitalisation. Even if all the participants come from the private sector, they have experienced this through their children. The parents have encountered that the schools don't provide any materials and that it is up to the teacher if they have online classes. The main issue with public school is the law, because it states that if there is only one student that cannot attend the lesson somehow (either digitally or physically), the teacher isn't allowed to assess the group. The students here have found also that some teachers are not interested in the digitalisation of the class, as they would not connect to the class (in a hybrid lesson) or would connect the camera but not interact with the online students.

Academies also claim that publishing houses are taking too long to adapt to the new situation and create a better digital offer. They have had to find their own ways of teaching online. There are lots of books that are written by teachers that do not teach anymore and what they write does not always work. Furthermore, they have not had the experience of teaching online and thus cannot produce adequate materials. Nowadays there is a need for different authors to join and create one book, instead of having only one author produce the material to be used in class, and those materials should not be linear. The main tool for online classes used by the participants is Zoom, although it was mentioned that Webex can be more popular (maybe in other sectors). Teachers use resources such as Quizlet, Bamboozle, Kahoot, British council and various similar resources and online games to support the lessons, but the class dynamics have changed: it is not always convenient to use breakout rooms and work in pairs or small groups and some activities were changed. It was mentioned that the next challenge for the teacher will be its role in the education in the future, when there are better resources and they can be substituted by videos or interactive exercises.

Main strengths highlighted

What are the main strengths—from teachers' and/or students' perspective—highlighted by the participants? (Include here any reference to good practices implemented by the participants, positive messages about digital tools and facts related to digital technologies in language teaching)

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Due to the fact that face-to-face-teaching had to be changed to online teaching, a standardisation of the tools to be used was required. So instead of adopting different tools, there should only be a few of them. Hence, teachers and learners are not overstrained. In addition, an exchange and collaboration between teachers is increasingly desired, since the change to online materials is very time-consuming and work-intensive (and since people are increasingly interested in how colleagues deal with the situation).

Other advantages mentioned were that learners acquire a new culture of listening to others, also that they can organise themselves better online (and they always know what their daily tasks are, as the course programme can be put online).

Eventually, some pupils tend to be more relaxed, when working from their private homes. According to one participant, especially weaker language learners benefit from this fact. Not being in a physical classroom encourages them to play a more active part (and timid pupils can interact in smaller learning groups as well). Thus, autonomous working is promoted at the same time through digital teaching

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Digital, in all its facets, and teaching are on the same track in terms of planning, objectives and expected results.

There are many benefits of the digital-language combination that have been pointed out, including: involvement, flexibility, reducing distances, fun, interest, developing potential, and - above all - the possibility of actually experiencing the language. There is a desire to find the most engaging and interactive pedagogical methods to improve the learning and teaching process, by making it more enjoyable for the students first and for the teachers as well.

Here we summarise some important considerations: *"Improving your target languages through social media is becoming easier. The tedious part of the language (the one that sometimes predominates at school) is grammar, so using social media to teach it can be useful to catch learners' attention"*. In addition, *"these new teaching methods are very useful for language teaching, not only because you can exploit them remotely, but also because they give access to real-time contents, which is essential for learning the 'real' language, not just the one you find in the grammar books"*.

And again, *“I would like to give an example with the Russian language. Through social networks, I had the chance to 'meet' a Russian teacher and then I decided to join her "community" and her platform which is constantly enriched with brand-new podcasts and videos every few days. As a teacher, I truly believe that this works and it is so engaging. If I had discovered these resources when I was still a student, I would certainly have used them much more. Today, I always invite my students to exploit these resources, because the 90-minute-lesson is obviously not enough, you need to practice on your own to really learn a language”*. We could go on, but this is the general thought which was unanimously expressed by our witnesses - and it seems necessary to insist on the proper and effective educational method, getting it on the right track.

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Regarding the teachers' point of view, the participants agreed with everything that was said in the interview. They commented that communication with students became easier. It was reported that while in the past they would rarely receive emails with questions from a student outside of class hours, this is now very common. Thus, the student-teacher relationship is strengthened. Then, the ability to automatically correct in various applications provides teachers with valuable time, as a quick check is enough. Correction in general is a rather monotonous and time-consuming process, so now teachers can allocate their time better. That is, instead of devoting two hours to corrections, they can focus on creating an interactive work and ensuring a quality result. The time was a point that was particularly emphasized in the Focus Group, both in relation to the faster correction, and to the possibility of conducting the course without wasting time on commutes. In case someone lives in a remote area it really takes a long time to get to the school / tutoring / home of his student, while in case he lives in a big city he will usually have to deal with the traffic or the hassle of public transport. The online conduct of the course is therefore very convenient in this respect. The participants also added that by engaging in digital media the teacher learns new teaching methods, which offer new possibilities. This contributes to his personal development, as he acquires skills useful in many different areas of life. Finally, the use of digital media is enjoyable for teachers, not just their students. Regarding the students' perspective, the participants commented that the student's interaction becomes threefold: with the teacher, with the digital media and with his classmates. In the first case, the interaction was always there, but now it is intensifying. The student ceases to be a spectator waiting to finish the lesson to return to his game and becomes an active participant. In the second case, new technologies already existed in the life of this generation of students, who associated them mainly with fun and leisure. Now these technologies are coming to be integrated in the educational process, making it more fun and interesting. Especially with regard to younger ages, there is great enthusiasm. It was specifically mentioned that in a lesson for children aged 4-6, in which a YouTube video was used with a song in a foreign language, the children were so excited that they asked for it for several lessons afterwards. In the third case,

communication with classmates during class, which is usually outside the rules of classroom behaviour, is normalized and extended outside the classroom, strengthening the bonds of the classroom. Inside the classroom students may be asked to take part in a quiz or game in groups, while outside the classroom a joint conversation can be set up to better organize or participate in a longer-term activity (for example, creating an electronic diary with the content of the courses).

In addition, the further familiarization of students with new technologies in educational contexts is very useful for their subsequent course (school, university and professional). It was commented that from personal experience, many students had difficulty in searching and evaluating online information for the preparation of assignments, but also in the preparation of Power Point presentations.

Finally, with the possibility of taking the course online, students can participate from wherever they are. This is most useful for older people, students and staff, who either travel frequently outside the home or have limited time to travel around the city, as do their teachers. In addition, the completion of courses is much easier, while through the method of electronic voting it is very easy to find the most appropriate time and day.

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- Access to authentic, real-world materials – e.g. advanced students of English can explore different varieties of English in countries around the world by visiting websites of broadcasters from those countries / watching TV shows and videos made by those countries
- Potential for interactive communication with students in target language countries: e.g. students who are studying Spanish holding video chats with students in Spain / projects to compare various aspects of their lives
- Gamification and fun while learning. E.g. kahoot quizzes to test recall of items studied, Quizlet challenges. Almost all learners seem to enjoy playing while learning
- Interaction with other students in the group in e.g. breakout rooms. Some students seem more comfortable in the online environment and are more willing to communicate there
- Easier to mix groups and move students out of their comfort zone. Students can work in many group combinations in the course of a lesson. e.g. automatic assignment to groups in zoom
- Collaboration tools improve discussion e.g. group can produce a presentation online together / brainstorming on Miro/Jamboard
- Differentiation; more opportunity for students to decide for themselves how to tackle an issue (e.g. exercises in the course book, talking with a partner, online practice exercises...) Students can repeat exercises until they have mastered the topic

- Organisation of class materials easier – no need to photocopy in advance / prepare game boards, remember dice etc. Especially appreciated by freelancers and those who teach in different schools, who would otherwise have to get there early to copy materials / carry a lot of extra materials around with them.
- Presentations to guide teacher and learners through the lesson plan. Attractive, can include jokes and interesting pictures to keep learner attention; written instructions to reinforce the spoken instruction / allow visual learners to benefit. Individual slides can be saved as pdfs and upload into the learning environment to give learners access to links and instructions when they are working independently.
- no need to create separate material.
- improved access to training, especially for working people/ those with caring responsibilities. Students can join from home/office with no need to travel. Attendance improved and more students are signing up to daytime courses.
- Flexibility for teachers: no need to factor in travel time when planning jobs.
- Allows learning to continue despite lockdowns.

SPAIN

The main strengths mentioned were that it is very comfortable to attend classes from your own room (and to work from home too). There have been fewer absences in class, as students can connect even if they are ill at home or even traveling in a train, and speaking of children, the parents can see what they do in class and how they behave. The teacher is always in control of the class, since he can share the book in the screen and everyone is in the same point. In the beginning of the pandemic, it was hard for the teachers to adapt so quickly, but after the summer they knew what they would be facing and they had a very positive attitude towards it, always eager to learn new ways to improve the classes.

Another strength is the possibility of accessing the internet during the class. Teachers can use every resource available instantly and they do not depend only on the publishing houses to get their resources. It takes less time to prepare the lessons.

Main weaknesses presented

What are the main weaknesses—from teachers' and/or students' perspective—highlighted by the participants? (Include here any reference to difficulties and barriers encountered by the participants, including negative experiences and the lack of resources or knowledge)

AUSTRIA

Several participants claimed that online teaching is rather challenging and time - and work-intensive. On the one hand, many technical problems or challenges were mentioned, such as a lack of equipment at the learners' side (also the majority of teachers have to make use of their private devices and accounts, and receive messages as well as e-mails 24/7), poor internet connection or poor visibility of content or exercises on the smartphone. On the other hand, due to technical problems, a lot of learning time is often lost. Especially older language learners do not have the required computer literacy, since they do not know how to up- or download files or to operate Skype or Zoom.

In addition, it was mentioned that there are not many materials of high quality available for digital teaching and that creating them by oneself is very time-consuming. Existing materials, however, have to be updated, complemented, and virtualised, too, which also takes a lot of time. One participant also pointed at the health aspect. Sitting in front of the computer for many hours is exhausting, that is why she bought a standing desk. Moreover, the social aspect was also emphasised by all participants. The exchange between students in a physical classroom is very important, especially in language teaching, and personal contact can therefore not be omitted. But also, the relationship between teachers and learners can be better fostered in presence. Operating online is more difficult for educators, especially to respond to all students and to integrate everyone. One participant mentioned that, for example, working with people attending a language course for literacy is very difficult online because explanations are limited. Leading the group or conducting group works was noted as difficult as well, because the educators cannot go from group to group as in face-to-face sessions. Although, Breakout rooms are possible, the control and the supervision are not as given as in class.

ITALY

We have been presented with weaknesses caused by the insufficient and inadequate 'material' resources available, such as the equipment, as well as the poor internet connection in some areas. There are also 'immaterial' weaknesses - which create resistance - due to the lack of specific skills and knowledge on how to teach and learn differently. One of our interviewees mentioned that according to the *OECD Skills Outlook 2019 – Thriving in a Digital World*, Italy was labelled as unequally prepared to seize the benefits of digital transformation. In our country – indeed – “individuals and workers often lack the foundation skills necessary

to flourish in a digital world. Lifelong learning systems – both formal and non-formal, need to be strengthened substantially to enable upskilling or reskilling throughout life”.
(<https://doi.org/10.1787/e98f82d2-en>)

In our classrooms, the grammar-translation method is still much more used, but it is less effective than the communicative-relational method, which would allow a real 'full immersion' in the language, getting to the grammar at a later stage. In Italy, instead, many teachers are mainly focused and concerned about the grammar, leaving the speaking practice behind. The teaching process should therefore be reviewed and renewed in these terms, and resources should be provided to integrate it.

Those who try to transmit language knowledge digitally tend to emphasise the time issue of having to prepare engaging lessons, the risk that learners may get distracted more easily and the loss of the face-to-face relationship, which can compromise important psychological and social aspects that come into play in learning. Not to be underestimated: many learners, even among the so-called 'digital natives', use technological tools to make their lives easier, but not to learn new things. What is needed is *“mediation and support in the use not only of social networks, but also of other digital resources in order to help them search for the information they need. Students often do not know how to do so properly and effectively. I'm not talking about online safety only, but about knowing how to find what I need, even for the simple pleasure of knowing it”*.

GREECE

The difficulties discussed are common to teachers and students. The most important of these is the lack of adequate resources to participate in an online course, e.g. the existence of appropriate equipment (computer, microphone, headphones) and a good internet connection. Apart from that, you also need some peace of mind, something that is difficult to achieve in a house with many family members present. In addition, even if all of the above are present, the internet connection is disrupted if many people are connected in the same house, which happens very often in the middle of a pandemic. As for teachers, it is important to have a good video and sound quality, but they are often not provided with the appropriate resources by their employer, so they are forced to make additional purchases, usually expensive, on their own. The financial constraint also concerns the students, of course, but in the case of teachers a good online presence is required for the smooth conduct of the course. It was commented that the bad connection in particular is very problematic in the case of online competitions, which already present difficulties (easy copying, different qualities of connections, etc.). The above leads to the existence of inequality between students, which cannot be resolved on the part of the teacher. Then, it was commented that the flow of the lesson is unnatural. Without the students' body language, the teacher finds it difficult to perceive the mood of the class and the level of

attention, as one can look at the camera and nod his head in the affirmative, but at the same time watch a movie on another tab of his computer or just not listening consciously. Easy distraction is a common problem for participants, who commented that they themselves get tired after a whole day in front of the computer. The negative effects of long hours of exposure to digital media are well known, making the balance between live and digital learning very important. Of course, in the midst of a pandemic such a balance is not easy to achieve. An interesting observation was about the excessive use of digital media (work, education, entertainment), which can lead to saturation, with students no longer having a positive attitude towards digital tools after returning to normalcy. But this is something that can be adjusted over time. The unnatural flow of the lesson also concerns the communication itself, with the dialogue being very difficult. Even with a good internet connection and equipment, it is difficult to understand when someone else has finished their speech and when they take a natural pause while talking. In addition, communication is awkward and difficult to get the word out, with the teacher being forced to ask by name, which removes his naturalness from the lesson and in some cases makes it seem stricter. Apart from that, there is always a small delay in the sound, which cumulatively becomes very tedious. In addition, the connection in Greece is often poor, with the image freezing and the sound distorted, which is very tedious. Also, because of all the above, two or more people often speak at the same time, especially at younger ages, creating additional confusion. It was also commented that the lack of a microphone (separate and not the one built into the camera or computer screen, which is usually of poor quality) is a common problem.

Another issue is the difficulty of solving technical problems, mainly by younger or middle-aged children, while their parents / guardians are often even less familiar with digital media and cannot help. As for the minor students, who are often forced to learn a foreign language by their parents and do not yet understand its benefits, they have the opportunity to avoid their lesson or work using excuses that are difficult to control. Common reasons heard in participants' lessons are that the internet connection is down or not at all good, the equipment (usually camera and microphone) is not working and so on. An interesting observation was about the boundaries between fun and lesson, which are slightly lost, while at the same time the authority of the teacher is weakened, he becomes more of a friend than a teacher. Thus, observing the rules of order (quiet, do not interrupt, speak nicely, etc.) is not easy. The educational process is reminiscent of play and younger children are easily distracted by it, making it difficult for the teacher to push the boundaries.

FINLAND

Technological issues.

- Classroom tech when not using own equipment: logging on (need to remember usernames and passwords for different rooms / schools.) Managing sound systems and projectors: all different, even in the same school. Updates can cause changes to the system so things no longer work; cannot rely on using same link system each time. (A particular problem with Bing)

- Online: need to log on to many different websites to access class materials – can be time consuming at the start of a lesson
- need to learn to use different meeting tools and platforms for teaching: takes time away from planning/teaching. Some teachers have to work on 4 or 5 different meeting tools and 3-4 platforms. Others are able to decide for themselves what to use, but are still not sure that their choices are the best.

Planning and organisation of materials:

- Lesson planning and organization has to be spot-on before uploading materials, so that they are in the right order for students to use in the lesson.
- Extra time needed to create / convert existing resources into ones that can be used online; teaching approach needs to change.
- need to manage many links/files sooner than just book/paper/desktop. Loading websites /videos can take time. (YouTube's new intro page particularly loathed). Need to have many pages open at the same time to ensure smooth transitions in the lesson, but then it can be hard to find the correct link for sharing
- E-resources for a particular course sometimes hard to use; resources for the same lesson not always grouped together (some publishers worse than others). Takes time to get them organised so that they can be used smoothly in a lesson.
- Finding suitable resources takes too much time: so much on the internet, but many are wrong level/unsuitable content.
- Tech for tech's sake, or because it really adds to learning? Hard to identify the most suitable app/website for a particular purpose. (Especially ones that do not require student registration).
- No chance for kinesthetic reinforcement / physical practice. Throwing a dice or drawing a card online does not have the same excitement as doing it in real life. Onscreen games feel the same as any other onscreen experience and do not create the same buzz as they do in the classroom.
- Tech failures mid lesson (teacher or student) – time consuming to fix, disrupt the flow of the lesson. Teachers feel their credibility may be damaged when they have problems with tech. The need for contingency plans when technology doesn't work: adds extra stress
- Some students still struggle with tech/don't have the right equipment (e.g. using mobile phone when materials work better on a computer). Much time spent managing technology and helping students with technical issues; less on the actual teaching. Whole group can be left hanging / put to work on filler tasks while teacher tries to help an individual student. Need to plan for tech problems/differentiate for different equipment at the planning stage; but some problems can't be anticipated.

Class management online

- The camera on/camera off debate goes on. Many students prefer not to have cameras on during lessons. Debate over whether teachers have the right to insist that cameras are on, or if students' right to privacy should prevail. One teacher has never seen her (university) students in the whole

year she has been teaching them. Most teachers would prefer to see their students, as interaction is seriously impaired without visual contact and non-verbal cues. No solution yet found.

- Sound. Unmuting takes time for students, and can reduce spontaneous communication. But background noise can mean that muting is necessary to avoid distraction. No solution found.

Group work

- setting up groups online takes time, especially when you need students in particular group.
- harder to monitor how groups are working when online. In the classroom you can listen in / watch body language to see how things are going without intruding on the group interaction, and can choose to interact/intervene when needed. In breakout rooms or equivalent, teacher cannot monitor progress from afar but must visit each room individually. Time consuming and clunky
- Knowing that the teacher cannot monitor them closely, some student groups may stray from the brief / use L1 instead of target language for exercises.
- The visible arrival of the teacher in the breakout room may disrupt group discussion/ lead to distraction.

Interaction with individual students

- lack of direct contact with students makes it hard to read body language and other non-verbal signals (especially when cameras are off); impossible to monitor progress and engagement. Especially hard to engage less active students; need to check in with them directly regularly; but if they have both camera and mike closed, it can be hard to assess what they are up to.

Assessment

- examinations and testing hard when students have access to e.g. online translators / dictionaries. Standard tests often need adapting / rewriting.
- Marking onscreen is often fiddly; it takes time and involves yet more hours staring at a screen; marking on paper takes time as papers need to be printed out, then scanned and uploaded once marked and ready to be returned. Verbal feedback takes more time as it needs to be organised /scheduled.

Physical and mental wellbeing

All agreed that teaching online is a very intense and tiring experience, and that they have encountered both physical and mental issues over the past year.

- Sitting in front of a screen for hours with no chance to move around – tough on eyes and body. Many report shoulder and back problems in particular.
- No direct contact with students / teaching colleagues: sense of isolation. Less inspiration, harder to brainstorm /problem solve informally. Spontaneity missing. Harder to maintain motivation.

- Working from home has created stress and sometimes conflict with other family members. Lack of a suitable work room or workspace, noise from other family members, difficulty in concentrating when there are other demands on their time, problems drawing a line between work and home life were all mentioned as issues.

Problems for students

- Social: Lack of direct contact with teacher and classmates: sense of isolation and less engagement with lessons. No sense of a break from the normal workday when lessons are in the same place, on the same computer they have been using for work.
- Tech: problems joining class and finding/working through assignments. Don't like to look at themselves all the time so stressful to have camera on in online lessons.
- Mental wellbeing: Hard to focus when there are so many other things to distract online; fatigue, physical and mental problems when in front of a computer all the time.

SPAIN

Social skills are far better developed in a face-to-face class than online, especially for children. For adults, the action of going to class might have been something that made them feel more compromised and compelled to assist, and now that they do not have to leave their home to assist to the lessons it is easier for them to stop going to class, or if one day a student does not feel like attending the lesson they have many excuses not to do it. Also, there are students who have noticed a lack of human contact and prefer not to take online classes. Apart from this, there can be technical difficulties either on the part of either the student or the teacher, and even some that they can do nothing about, such as power outages or internet errors. The centres have to make an important investment in technologies such as computers, whiteboards, cameras and microphones, etc. if they haven't been doing it in the past (which most have), and hybrid classes are exceptionally demanding for the teachers. Teachers have found that the courses are a lot slower because the classes are less smooth than in face-to-face lessons (especially in hybrid classes, which have the worst of both worlds).

Example of good practices

Describe briefly the examples, giving a short description and including links, if any

AUSTRIA

Moodle, for instance, was highlighted as a very good example in this focus group because the platform offers many opportunities. The possibility to include external tools such as H5P or flashcards was mentioned as very helpful as well. It was also said that video conferences are often held. LearningApps was also mentioned as a good tool. It works well and creative learning games can be created quickly and easily, especially by the students themselves. Quizlet is also used with pleasure, e.g., for teaching the different times. Edmodo is another tool used by one participant for uploading audio and video files and for communication. Padlet was highlighted too, because it is very simple, has good functions and looks better than competing products. In addition, the participants often use different sites on the internet, digital textbooks or the websites of textbook publishers. Since it includes a great number of audio-material from textbooks that are used in foreign language learning (such as “Schritte Plus”), YouTube should be used as well. However, the participants consider it very important that not too many tools are used so that the learners keep an overview and do not get confused (learners should be offered training on complicated tools).

ITALY

Many tools, platforms and software tools were mentioned in our discussion, going from the use of Moodle, Erasmus and Twinning programmes to Instagram and YouTube. The trend of using social networks also for educational purposes was stressed out and this possibility of informal learning is well established and may support the learners in improving and practicing their TL on their own. **Norma’s Teaching** was mentioned as an example of good practice: Norma is an English teacher from Italy who is well known for her innovative teaching methodology. After having resigned from the school where she was working, during the pandemic she started using Instagram and Tik Tok to provide free English mini-lessons, gathering in a very short time about six hundred thousand followers. She became an inspiration as she succeeded in creating her own new, contemporary and effective method by exploiting the digital world. (normasteaching.com)

Virtual Reality was also mentioned: one of our participants mentioned the VR may be used to support schools and businesses in improving the way they learn or teach English as a foreign language. (<https://www.goldlotus.co/>)

GREECE

The main digital tools used were mentioned in detail in the interview. Only Google Forms has been added to the Focus Group, which is a very handy tool for creating a variety of documents (multiple choice quizzes, surveys, etc.).

FINLAND

See teaching tools and positives above; similar list also in the interview report

SPAIN

As examples of good practices, the teachers have a very clear communication channel with the students with the use of LMS (language management systems, Google Classroom or Moodle). They have been using Jamboard and Google Docs to do collaborative work in class. Teachers have a very clear and simple structure for their lessons that the students know and can easily follow, and it is very important to establish rules or an acceptable policy: compromise to do (or not to do) something, having the camera on at all times, not recording the lesson on their own.

Another example of good practice is the initiative Babel World Tour, where the academy took advantage of the online teaching environment to introduce the students to native English speakers from all over the world to have a chat and get to know their cultures without having to move. The last example mentioned in the focus group was using the screen as if the teacher was a TV host, or rather, something similar to a Twitch Streamer, and use changing backgrounds and video filters (SnapCamera) to keep the student's attention focused in the lesson.

Online teaching before and after COVID-19

How has it changed?

AUSTRIA

Before COVID-19, digital tools were rarely used in language teaching (only for practicing CVs, for instance). Due to the crisis, most of the teaching has been changed to online teaching. Initially this was a difficult transition, but now people have become accustomed to online teaching and have developed different routines. Therefore, online teaching has lost some challenges. Increasingly, support is offered by the organisations themselves, e.g., by providing end devices for the learners. Also, it has now become even more important for the participating educators to constantly update themselves in order to stay up to date and to provide good teaching to the learners. There is also a greater desire for collaboration and sharing between language teachers. For example, one participant mentioned that before the pandemic there was the problem that everyone used their own tools and worked alone. But this was rather difficult, especially when one had to stand in for a colleague. Therefore, a standardised platform, however, would simplify working for teachers and learners.

ITALY

COVID-19, in its health, economic, social and cultural crisis, forced everyone to look in the mirror. Necessity and willingness were put on the same stage and performed together. Among the many actors involved we found - and still do - teachers and their students. Culture, teaching and learning were also put in the picture. We all did realise that there was a need to 'get it right', to accelerate, to enhance and to try new things. Languages were no exception, and the digital world has increasingly embraced them, offering new tools and methodologies. Among our interviewees, there are those who say that we must not go backwards, there are those who claim that we should mediate between the 'new' and the 'old', but there is no one who regrets the 'old' system.

GREECE

The transition to teaching after COVID-19 was different for each age group. Younger children have had considerable difficulty getting used to the new media, especially in terms of concentration and usage. It was commented that for that age group, exclusively online teaching is not possible. For middle-aged children, parents and teachers the transition was relatively smooth and they got used to it quickly. For the university students the transition was very easy, due to greater familiarity with new technologies and their daily use and in contexts other than fun.

FINLAND

Only one of the participants had done much in the way of online teaching before COVID, and even that was occasional short courses only. Since March 2020, everyone has been online for most or all of the year. At first most viewed online teaching as a temporary situation, and there was little appetite to put much time into developing specifically online teaching materials. With the repeated extensions of lockdowns, teachers have come to accept the new normal and have worked to adapt their teaching materials and approaches so that teaching works better online. The initial switch to online teaching was a shock and brought technical struggles for many; but most problems have now been ironed out and most teachers say they feel reasonably confident teaching online. But all are waiting to get back into the classroom. The unanimous feeling is that language learners should be in the same space to ensure proper interaction with teacher and peers. Language is, after all, about communication, and online exercises cannot replace real-world interaction. Some courses are however still likely to stay online even after restrictions end – for example those catering to groups of people who are widely spread geographically. Some exercises and apps may also continue to be useful, although this will need all participants to bring an internet connected device to class. In practice this probably means that only activities suitable for use on smartphones will continue.

SPAIN

Online teaching was already predominant before Covid (not necessarily language teaching or in conventional schools, but millions of people did online courses, mainly "massive online open course" style), and online teaching has not changed much, though there are many more people studying this way now than before Covid. However, there are more and more synchronous online courses. Most people who were reluctant or hesitant about online lessons now may even prefer online classes. One of the roles of the teacher has always been that of the motivator, making people want to learn, mainly with children, but also with adults. Now that role has been intensified and emotional intelligence is very important. Nowadays teachers have to try to make their lessons entertaining and motivating and run away from dullness. Something that has also changed is that teachers now go into the houses of the students, and parents are ever vigilant of what their children (and the teachers) do, and how they behave, and teachers need to take this in consideration.

Training needs

Please mention whether the target group interviewed felt the need join to a training course to improve or enhance their digital, social, and personal skills

AUSTRIA

For online teaching educators require many competences that they did not necessarily need before, or some competences are now needed in other ways. For example, teachers need to have different digital competences, be familiar with their devices and tools, be able to create materials for digital teaching and conduct online teaching, and be able to do research in internet and be familiar with aspects such as licences of images or videos. In this respect, it is also important to be open to innovations and to be able to learn. It is also essential to find new ways of explaining things and to respond to and support learners in a more individual way. One has to be able to adapt, use different methods and involve all learners. In addition, one participant mentioned that more trust has to be built up with the learners because there is a physical distance to them. Nevertheless, it is important to let them work alone and without a camera. The participant also said that it is important to take care of oneself and to allow oneself some quiet time. Another participant said that at the beginning it would be helpful to have a workshop where different tools and their functions are presented, so that educators have a first overview of possible alternatives for online teaching.

ITALY

Our participants would be willing to join a training course.

It is felt the need to learn and implement new teaching approaches when it comes to foreign languages: *“The teaching method should be reconsidered: first they teach you the grammar, then how to use the rules, then you see how to speak and, in the end, you see that perhaps the pronunciation is even different from what you learned at school. In the real world, the native speaker starts by speaking the language and only then learns the rules.”*

The course should give an overview on the specific tools and software available for teaching languages. Teachers need to know how to use IT tools to prepare effective and engaging lessons.

It is important to know how to involve the students and be flexible, tailoring their lessons according to the needs of the learners.

GREECE

While participants would be open to the possibility of attending a training seminar, they commented that this should not be too basic for digital tool handling skills, something they could learn by watching a related video on YouTube or another platform. Instructions for using more sophisticated tools would be welcome. The main gap that the participants identify concerns the way of teaching with digital media, as mentioned in the previous section, the teacher-student balances are very different, as well as the challenges they have to face. It was commented that it would be even better for such a course to be officially integrated in education, either in language teacher training schools, or in the schools and tutoring centres themselves. Thus, the acquaintance with and the good use of new technologies will not be left to the discretion of the teacher, whoever wants, will have to devote personal time and maybe money to be trained. How to behave in an online classroom should also be taught to students, along with a guide to safe internet use, a way to evaluate information, virus protection and more. The internet is extremely useful, but at the same time with improper use it can become very dangerous for a child.

FINLAND

Most feel confident in their basic digital skills and don't feel the need for help with nuts-and-bolts issues. Some topics which would be of interest:

Developing existing skills

- recommendations for help pages / channels to help develop skills from basic user to proficient (e.g. presentation, word processing, games development) identifying new tools:
 - how to evaluate potentially useful platforms / tools
 - introduction to freely available teaching apps and what can be done with them
 - programmes suited to particular activities (e.g. vocabulary learning, listening skills, interactive communication)
 - how to find help with technical issues/ how to discover extra features for programmes / apps in use.
- For all the above, step by step instructions for basic operation: demonstration of what else is possible, and where to find more support later.

learner engagement and online pedagogy

- tips and tricks for keeping students engaged online
- creating online rapport with and between students

Self-care while working online (physical, mental) for both students and teachers

- e.g. exercises and ergonomic solutions to prevent physical problems;
- awareness of mental strains and how to avoid/minimise them

Teaching materials

- how to make material/adapt existing material quickly/
- where to find ready-made easily: search strategies to maximise useful hits on e.g. google /YouTube

Student support

- How to guide students through technical issues
- Low tech solutions for those who don't have access to many resources.

SPAIN

- Teachers need to know very well the basics and have mild advanced knowledge of the teaching platform they are going to use, and how to use it skilfully.
- They need to establish the work dynamics and the basic rules, so they need to know what they are and how to adapt them to their specific needs.
- Teachers need to know what they are going to face beforehand, and how the students perceive the class (get to know the user interface from the viewer's point), which problems they can have and how to solve them.
- They need emotional intelligence.
- Teachers need to know how to prepare each lesson: do they need shorter activities, send some files to the students so they can be prepared?
- How to maintain the attention of the students (learn to see the reflection of the screens on the student's face...).
- Motivation and innovation techniques.
- The students should get a preparation sheet or video to know how the class will work before starting the course.
- How the data protection laws work and what is adequate in online classes.
- They need to simplify their language so students can understand better (communication is less fluid in online environments).
- They could use a can-do checklist to see if they know how to teach online and feel more confident about it.
- Self-care (mental and physical) and how to transmit it to the students too.

4.5. Literature research and *Good Practices* collection

The purpose of the literature research was to identify and gather together further examples of practices and resources which might encourage teachers to expand their digital teaching repertoire. Research focused in particular on three areas: apps, platforms, software and/or tools that have proved valuable in digital language teaching; good practices which might inspire other teachers; and examples of other projects which have been developed in the field.

Drawing on the information gathered in the research phase, project partners identified **21 examples of good practices and useful resources**, details of which were then set out in a collection of practical illustrated information cards. The collection is designed to be used by teachers and learners who are interested in finding new and engaging materials for language learning.

The table of contents at the start of the collection gives a brief introduction to the practices and tools which are included; this allows users to quickly identify resources which will be of most interest to them.

Each card then presents the practice/resource in more detail, explaining how it can be used most effectively in language teaching and learning. Links to downloads and extra resources, tips from regular users and illustrations of the tools in use help teachers and/or learners to make the most of the new resources in their own teaching/learning.

The collection can be downloaded [here](#).

COLLECTION OF

Good Practices and useful resources

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Babel World Tour
- Baamboozle
- Drive & Listen
- Gold Lotus
- Google Classroom
- Kahoot
- Learning Activity Management System
- Lyrics Training
- Lyrikline - Listen to the poet
- Norma's Teaching
- Online Books
- Padagogy Wheel
- Padlet
- Pixton
- Prezi
- Radio Garden
- Sanako Connect - Online Language Lab
- Ted Talk
- Vocaroo.com
- Wordwall
- Zoom



More details about the resources in the collection are set out below.

- ✚ [Baamboozle](#) is a website where you can make your own games to help your students review what they have learnt or get to know a new topic in a fun and engaging way.
- ✚ [Babel world tour](#) is a virtual tour around the world through visits in class by mystery guests. Each mystery guests comes from a different country and participates in the online class for a set amount of time;
- ✚ [Drive & Listen](#) is a very simple concept. You choose among a list of 53 cities around the world and, all of a sudden, you find yourself in a car, in traffic, in that city, listening to the local / national radio.
- ✚ Founded in June 2018, [Gold Lotus](#) is a consultancy offering support and proprietary VR content to individuals, schools and businesses to improve the way they develop English as a foreign language skills, cultural understanding and digital literacy using virtual reality;
- ✚ [Google Classroom](#) is an online learning management system, which allows distribution of teaching materials and online discussion, as well as assignment setting, marking and feedback. Associated tools and apps give the possibility for a wide range of different activities;
- ✚ [Kahoot](#) is an online platform (and app) which lets you create fun quiz show games for your lessons that your students will absolutely love, and you can even use other teacher's games and share yours;
- ✚ [LAMS](#) is a system for designing, managing and delivering collaborative learning activities. It provides teachers with an environment that allows for easy visual monitoring of student progress.
- ✚ [Lyrics training](#) is an easy and fun way to learn and improve foreign languages skills, through music videos and the lyrics of popular songs;
- ✚ [Lyrikline](#) is an international website for contemporary poetry. Here you can listen to international poetry, recited by the authors themselves, and read the poems both in their original languages and translations;
- ✚ [Norma](#) is an English teacher from Italy who is well known for her innovative teaching methodology that is recognized as Fun, Fast, and Fantastic. She delivers all her courses online through Instagram and Tik Tok;
- ✚ **Online books** give learners the chance to read a variety of original texts in the target language; the collection includes links to some useful websites where learners can access them;
- ✚ The [Padagogy Wheel](#) was designed to help teachers to understand how they can use mobile apps in their teaching. It is a device that can be applied every day on every lesson and shows how apps can be used with educational reasons;

- ✚ [Padlet](#) is an online notice board tool that can help digitize the classroom by creating an online post-it board that allows you to insert ideas anonymously or with your name in an easy to use and handy way;
- ✚ [Pixton](#) is a cartoon creation tool that allows its users to create awesome comics. Educators and students can both make and share their comic strips;
- ✚ [Prezi](#) is a web-based tool for creating presentations that works like a visual storytelling software alternative to traditional slide-based presentation formats;
- ✚ With "[Radio Garden](#)" one can listen live to thousands of different radio stations worldwide;
- ✚ [Sanako Connect](#) is an online language laboratory where learners can practice their language skills especially speaking and listening - either independently or in scheduled sessions;
- ✚ [TED talks](#) cover almost all topics from science to business to global issues. They are short, powerful talks and exist in more than 110 languages. There are different initiatives with different goals and ideas that can be followed;
- ✚ [Vocaroo.com](#) is a very simple yet effective web-based learning tool for recording (or uploading) audio with lots of options for sharing and saving the recordings;
- ✚ [Wordwall](#) allows you to create a range of interactive resources to encourage learners to practice language in a fun and gamified way. There is also a huge collection of resources by other users;
- ✚ [Zoom](#) is a popular meeting tool which allows live teaching to go ahead regardless of where teachers and learners are located. The platform offers a variety of different tools for interaction and collaboration;

5. Conclusions and next steps

The various multimethod research activities conducted in the first phase of the Fit4DigiLinE project - desk research, online surveys, semi-structured interviews, focus groups - have produced a large amount of valuable data concerning the status quo of digital language teaching in partner countries, - including the advantages and disadvantages of online teaching, and the skills and training needs of language teachers.

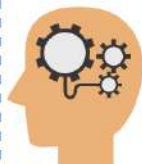
The evidence is clear: especially at this particular period in time, teachers feel the need to receive both technical and didactic help to better engage with their students in a digital environment. They are well aware that, following the Covid-19 pandemic, there may be no return to the old “normal”, after the leap forward in digital language teaching that was brought in by the enforced move online. In addition, generations are changing and the standard lessons may no longer be enough; they will need to be enriched with more engaging content, even when delivered in person. Updating of teachers’ skills to allow them to meet the challenges of digital language teaching is therefore a high priority.

A careful analysis of project research findings has permitted the identification of themes, competences and requirements which will need to be covered in the online training course which will be developed in the next phase of the project, and in the MOOC which will be its final output. The competences were grouped into three main areas: personal skills, social skills and digital skills.

The outline list of course contents and competences to be covered are set out in the catalogue of requirements on the next page.

Catalogue of Requirements

PERSONAL SKILLS



- Stress resistance and resilience
- Problem-solving and flexibility
- Emotional Intelligence
- Thinking outside the box
- Creativity and adaptability
- Dealing with disruption
- Running effective lessons
- Individual and peer-learning
- Critical thinking
- Tips and tricks for keeping students engaged online

SOCIAL SKILLS

- Communication skills
- Building relationships and connections with students
- Patience and empathy
- Leadership
- Creating motivation
- Providing constructive feedback
- Online conflict management
- Taking into account any practical or technical difficulties learners may have



DIGITAL SKILLS



- Concrete overview and practical hands-on guidance for programmes and apps suitable for language teaching
- DigComp, DigCompEdu, GDPR and digital security
- Digital citizenship (including the SDGs)
- How to edit/cut/adjust/extract audio and video resources (mainly using free and user-friendly software)
- How to make material and where to find ready-made easily
- Knowing where to go for advice and how to find help with technical issues
- Low tech solutions for those who don't have access to many resources
- How to approximate the face-to-face learning experience while using digital meeting tools
- Using digital assessment tools to monitor students' performance and
- Self-care while teaching digitally

*»Technology will never replace great teachers,
but in the hands of great teachers, it's transformational.*

George Couros

Partners hope this report may lay the basis for further and more extensive research activities.

Stay tuned on Facebook or our project website to receive more information on digital language education (@fit4digiline).

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Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

The European Commission's support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflect the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.