Needs Analysis Report on Digital and Life Competences for Inclusive Adult Education

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KA210-ADU-000281588

Section 1

Needs Analysis Framework and Methodology

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Purpose of the Needs Analysis

The Needs Analysis represents a core activity of the Erasmus+ Project ”Digital Empowerment Campaign” (DEC) and constitutes the evidence-based foundation for all subsequent project outputs.

Its main purpose was to:

- Identify existing barriers to participation in adult education and Erasmus+ opportunities for learners with disabilities.
- Assess the level of DIGITAL and LIFE competences among adult education staff and learners with disabilities.
- Collect data to inform the design of inclusive, accessible and needs-based project results

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Target Groups Involved

The Needs Analysis targeted two complementary groups:

1. **Adult Education Staff**: Trainers, educators, tutors and administrative staff working in adult education organisations, NGOs, training centres and social cooperatives, eventually directly involved in supporting adult learners with disabilities.
2. **Adult Learners with Disabilities**: Adults aged approximately 20–50, with physical, sensory or cognitive disabilities, often characterised by low levels of formal education and limited access to digital tools.

The dual perspective ensured a holistic understanding of both organisational capacity and learner experience.

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Methodological Approach

The Needs Analysis was conducted through a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative and qualitative data collection. Key features of the methodology:

- Two structured online questionnaires, one for staff and one for learners.
- Digital format to ensure accessibility and transnational participation (Microsoft Forms)
- The questionnaires were disseminated in Italy, Spain and Poland.
- The Needs Analysis collected over 150 validated responses
- Quantitative data were aggregated to identify trends, gaps and recurring needs
- Qualitative answers were coded and grouped by thematic areas.
- Questions aligned with the DIGCOMP and LIFECOMP frameworks.
- Focus on real practices, perceived barriers and training needs.

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Methodological Approach

The two tailored questionnaires were designed using inclusive language and accessible formats. They were translated into English, Spanish, Polish, and Italian and were used to collect data on self-perceived digital and life competences, as well as perceived barriers and training needs related to inclusion, accessibility, and participation in Erasmus+ mobility.

STAFF QUESTIONNAIRE

<- Click to see the questionnaires ->

LEARNERS QUESTIONNAIRE

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Section 2
Results – Staff Questionnaire

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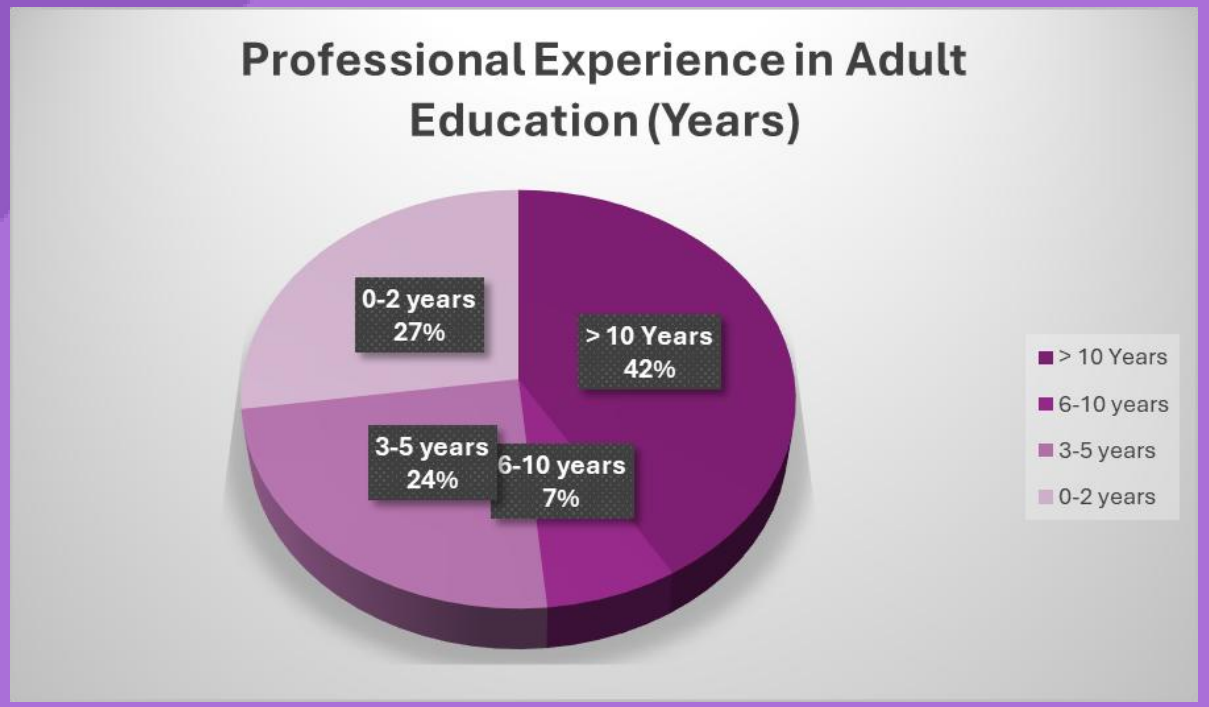
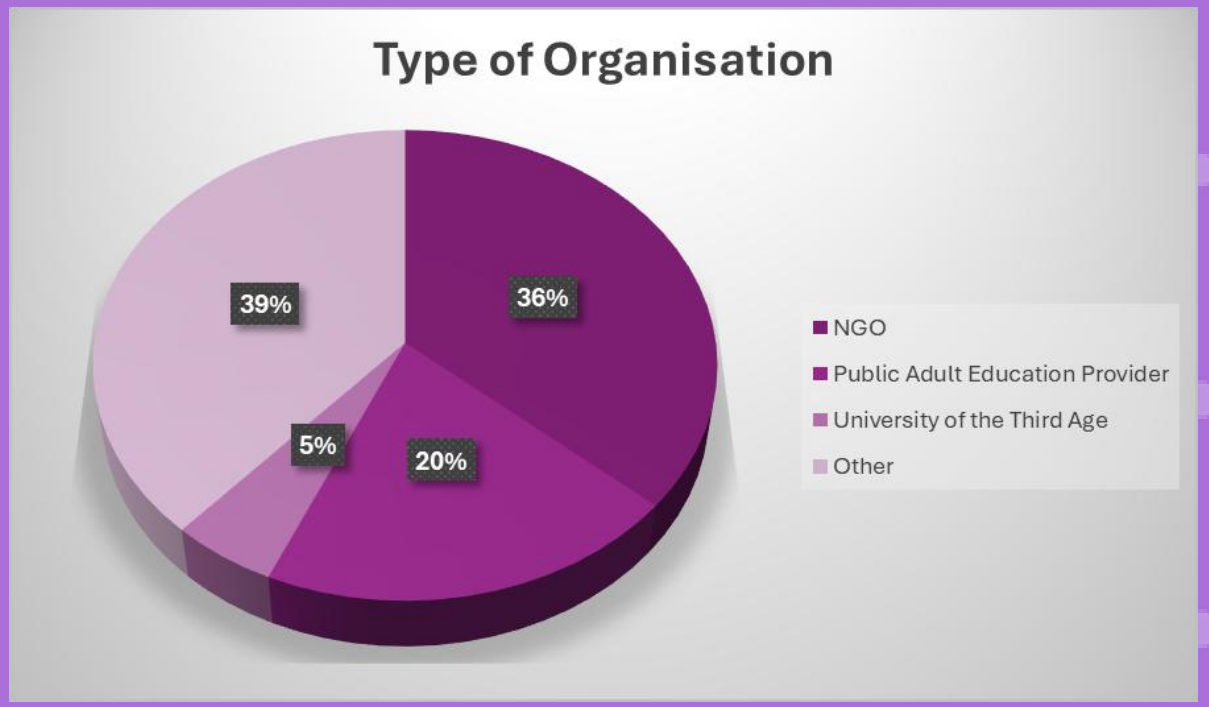
Respondents' Profile





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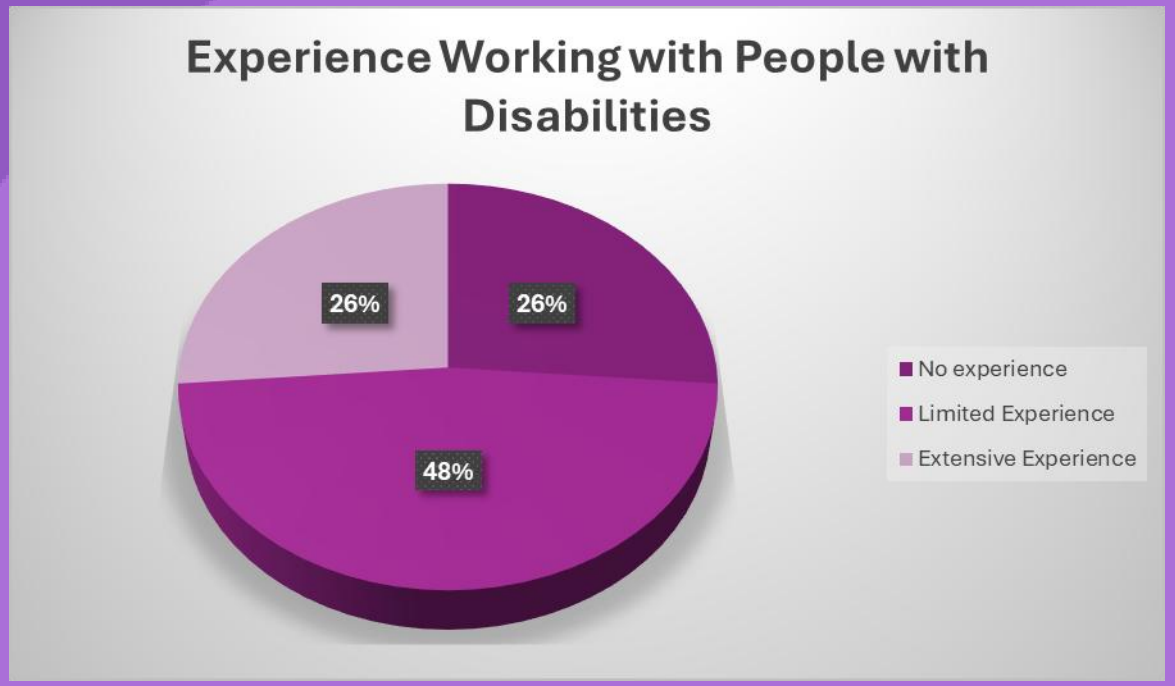

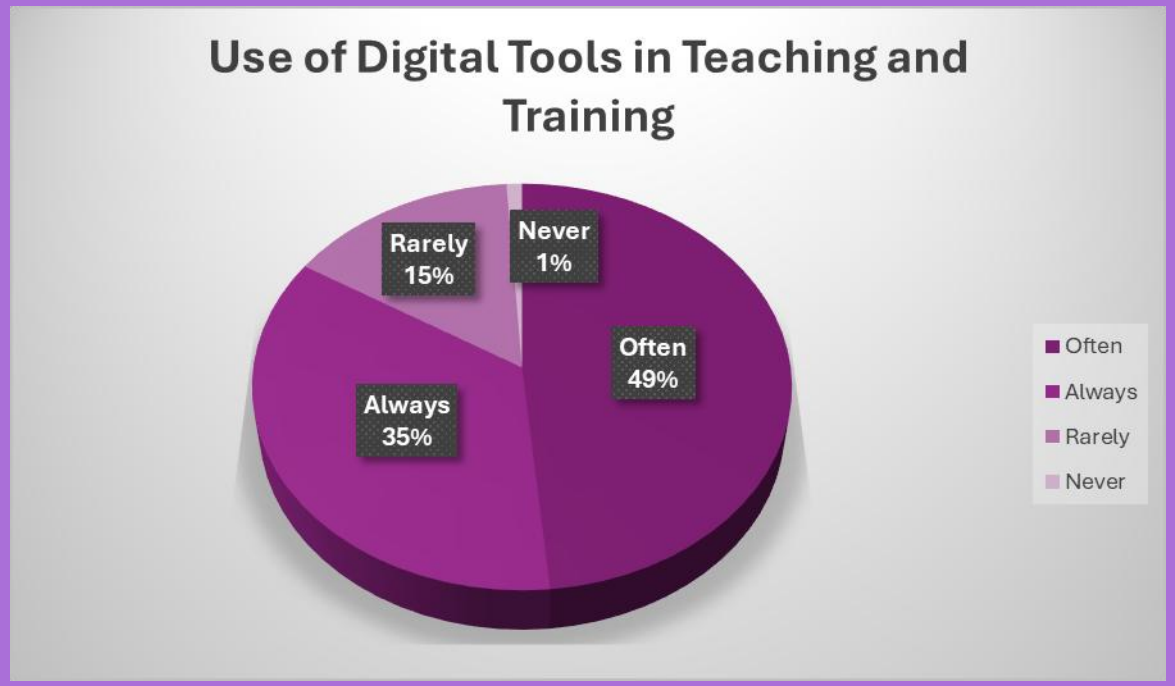

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Respondents' Profile

Key Insights:

- The sample is highly experienced: nearly half of respondents have more than 10 years of experience in adult education, ensuring practice-based and reliable insights.
- Digital tools are widely used in teaching and training, creating a strong foundation for integrating accessible and inclusive digital solutions.
- Most staff work in NGOs or hybrid, non-institutional contexts, often characterised by less stable resources, infrastructures, and organisational procedures. This highlights the need for flexible and easily adaptable inclusive solutions.
- While the majority have some experience with people with disabilities, almost half report only limited experience, pointing to a clear need for structured guidance and capacity building.

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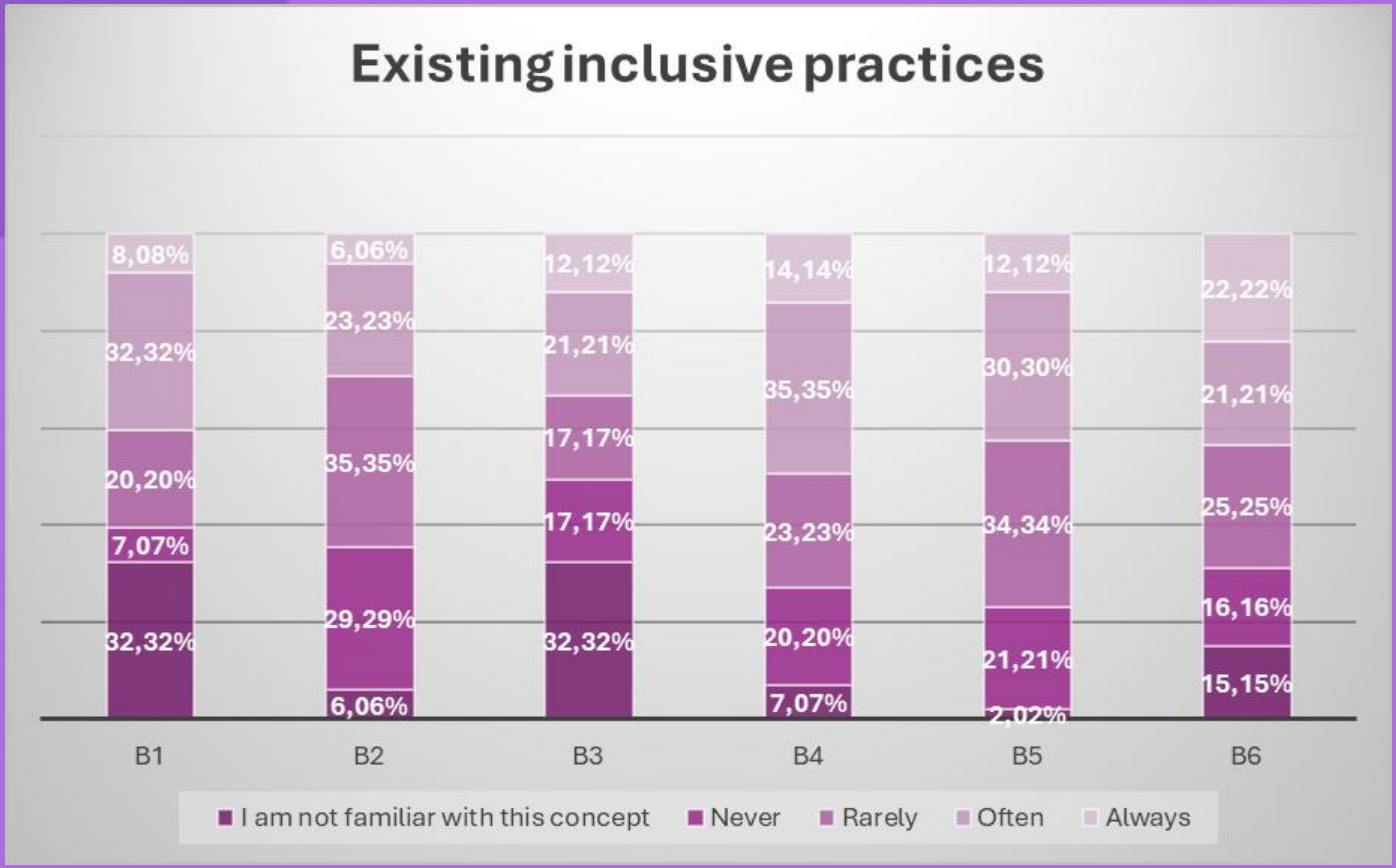
Existing Inclusive Practices



B1 – Learning materials in accessible formats, compliant with recognised standards (e.g. WCAG)

B2 – Subtitles, written transcripts, sign language interpreters or equivalent support

B3 – Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

B4 – Tutor or peer educator support

B5 – Text alternatives and audio descriptions for images and videos

B6 – Measures to support participation in Erasmus+ mobility opportunities

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Existing Inclusive Practices

Key Insights:

- The overall picture reveals a “two-speed” situation: positive intentions and some inclusive practices are present, but their adoption is uneven and rarely systematic.
- A significant share of staff are not familiar with key inclusive design standards and only a minority apply them regularly. This highlights a clear need for practical guidance.
- Communication and multisensory accessibility measures are applied inconsistently, indicating a lack of structured implementation.
- Human support measures, including tutors and peer educators, are more commonly used and reflect an existing sensitivity toward inclusion.
- Support for participation in Erasmus+ mobility opportunities shows a positive level of interest and awareness. However, despite this declared sensitivity, almost half of respondents report that such actions are carried out rarely or not at all, revealing a gap between intention and actual implementation.

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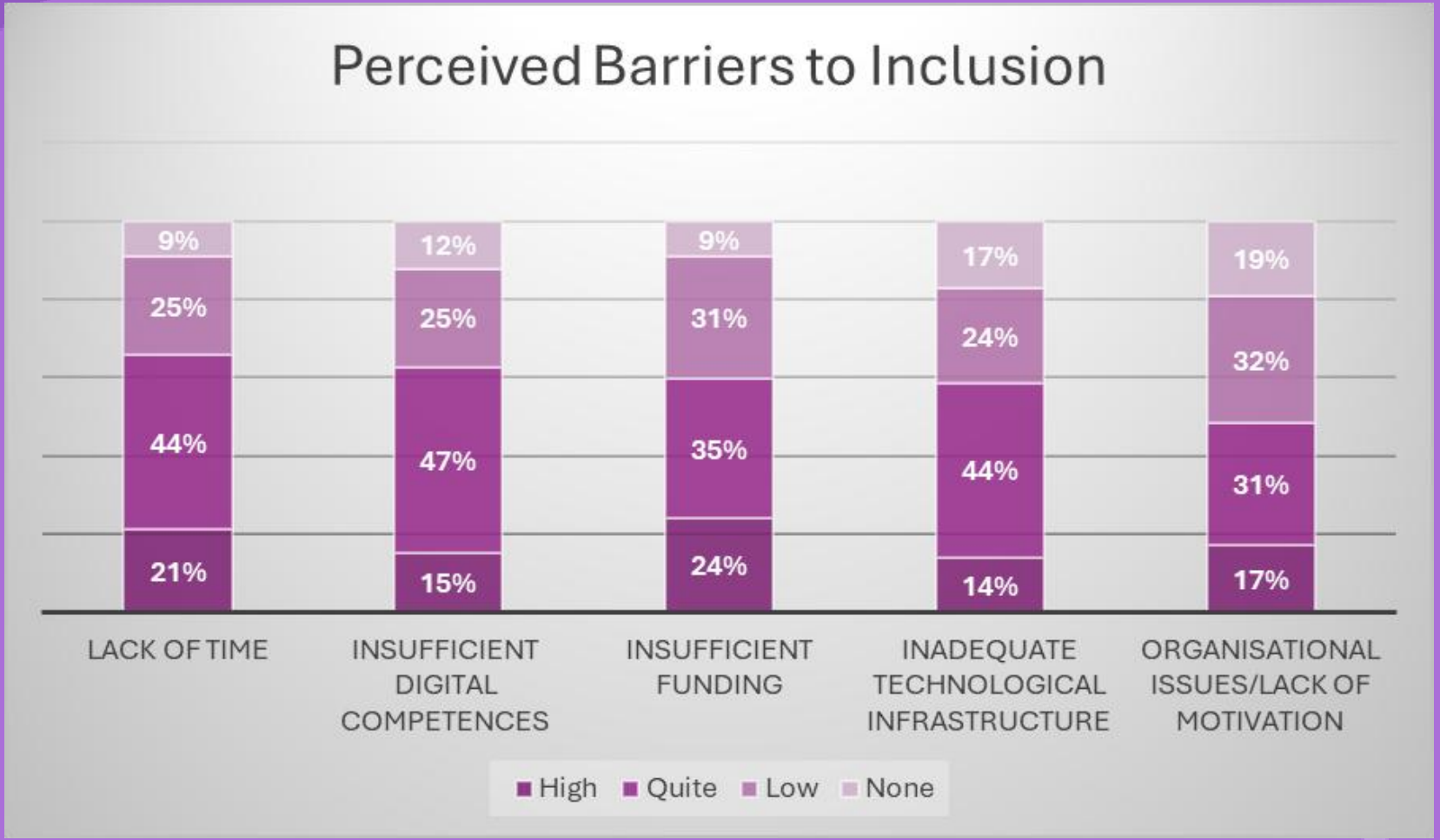
Perceived Barriers to Inclusion



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Perceived Barriers to Inclusion

Key Insights:

- The main barriers to inclusion are structural and capacity-related. Insufficient digital competences among staff, limited funding, and inadequate technological infrastructure are identified as major obstacles by a clear majority of respondents.

- Digital skills emerge as the most critical challenge, confirming the need for targeted capacity building and practical digital support for adult education staff.

- Time constraints and low organisational or staff motivation are reported by nearly half of the sample. While not the most cited barriers, they act as negative “multipliers”: when time and motivation are lacking, even effective tools and resources risk not being adopted.

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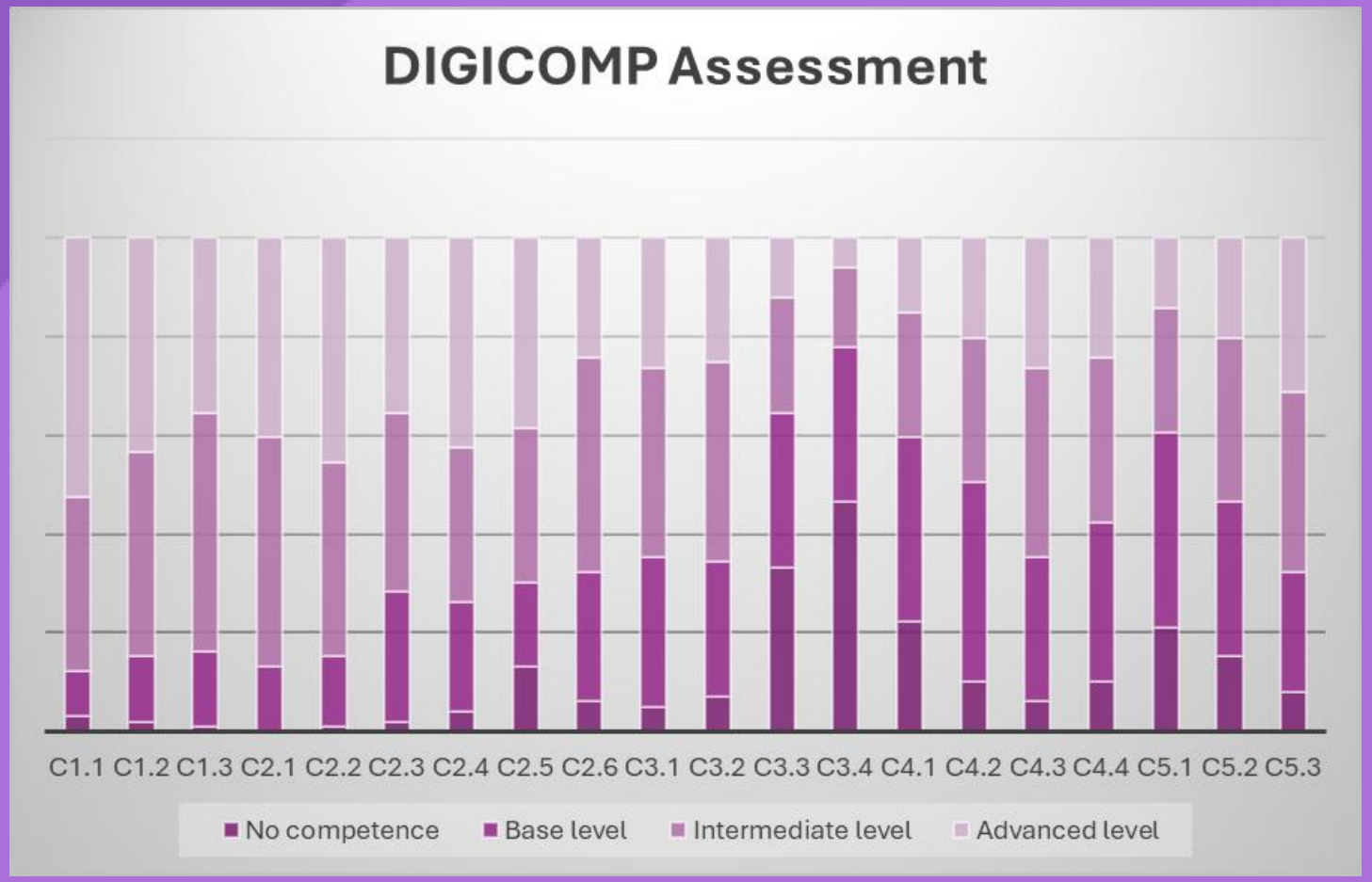
STAFF Digital Competence Areas (DIGCOMP Framework)



1. Information and Data Literacy
1.1 Browsing, searching and filtering data, information and digital content
1.2 Evaluating data, information and digital content
1.3 Managing data, information and digital content

2. Communication and Collaboration
2.1 Interacting through digital technologies
2.2 Sharing through digital technologies
2.3 Participating in digital citizenship
2.4 Collaborating through digital technologies
2.5 Netiquette
2.6 Managing digital identity

3. Digital Content Creation
3.1 Developing digital content
3.2 Integrating and re-elaborating digital content
3.3 Copyright and licences
3.4 Programming

4. Safety
4.1 Protecting devices
4.2 Protecting personal data and privacy
4.3 Health and well-being
4.4 Environmental awareness

5. Problem Solving
5.1 Solving technical problems
5.2 Identifying needs and technological solutions
5.3 Creative use of digital technologies

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STAFF Digital Competence Areas (DIGCOMP Framework)

DIGCOMP Staff – Strengths and Gaps:

- Overall, staff show strong basic to intermediate digital competences, which make them capable to implement potential inclusive digital tools in Adult Education.
- The highest competence levels are observed in Information and Data Literacy and Communication and Collaboration, confirming that staff are generally confident in navigating information and interacting through digital technologies.
- The weakest area is Digital Content Creation, followed by Safety and Problem Solving. Critical gaps emerge As well in copyright and licensing, programming, technical troubleshooting, and data protection. These weaknesses directly affect the ability to produce accessible materials, reuse digital resources correctly, and work safely with learners' data.
- These findings explain why insufficient digital competences among staff are perceived as a major barrier to inclusion. Without targeted support in these areas, staff may struggle to independently develop inclusive digital solutions or to support learners with disabilities in acquiring advanced and employability-oriented digital skills.

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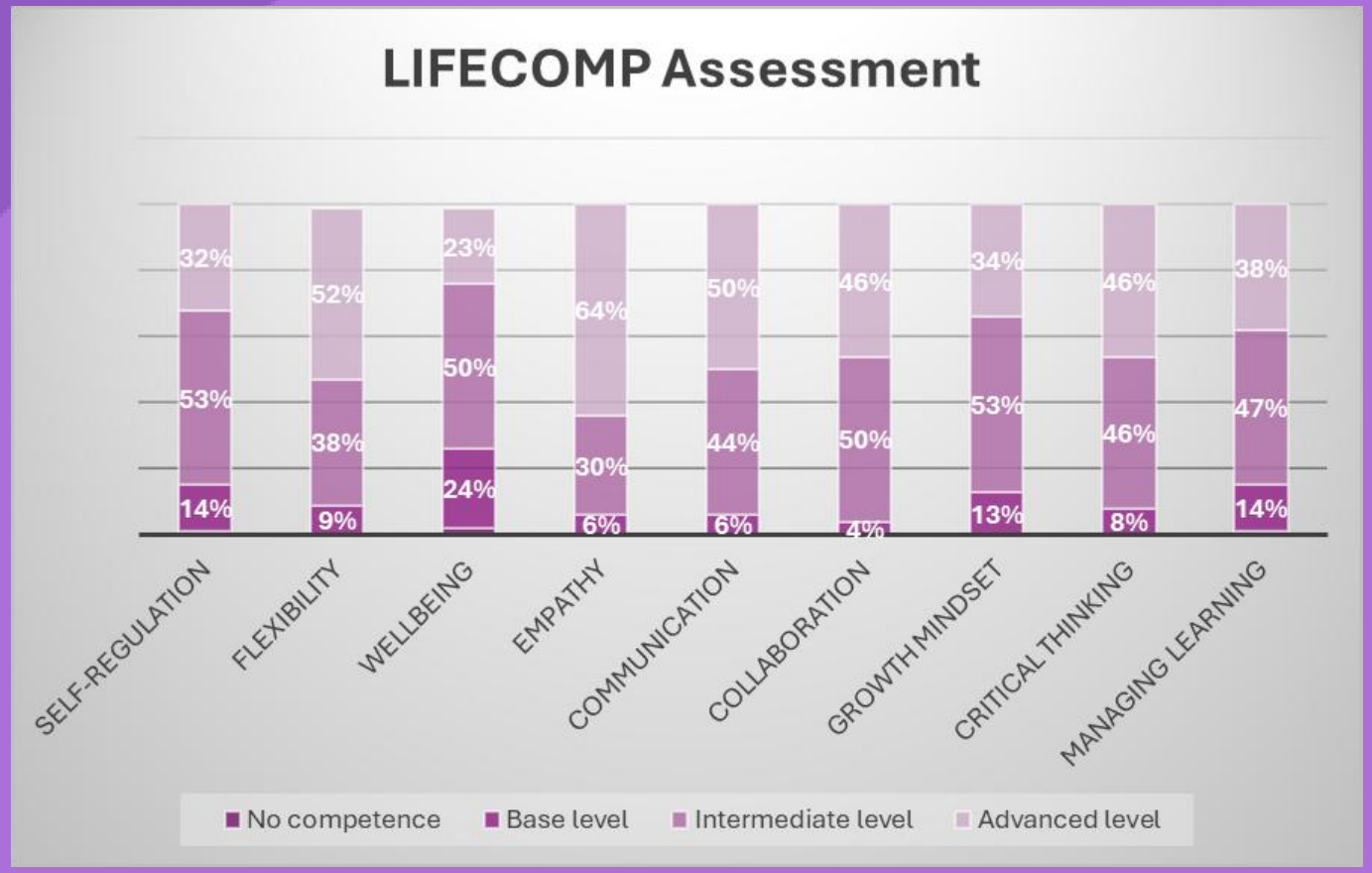
STAFF Life Competence Areas (LIFECOMP Framework)



Self-regulation – managing emotions, impulses, and behaviours

Flexibility – adapting to different situations and roles

Well-being – taking care of physical and mental health

Empathy – understanding and respecting others' perspectives

Communication – expressing oneself and listening effectively

Collaboration – working with others towards shared goals

Growth mindset – seeing mistakes and feedback as opportunities

Critical thinking – analysing information, reasoning, and evaluating

Managing learning – planning, monitoring, and reflecting on one's own learning

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STAFF Life Competence Areas (LIFECOMP Framework)

LIFECOMP Staff – Strengths and Gaps:

- Staff show strong interpersonal skills — empathy, communication and collaboration — providing a solid base for inclusive work with diverse learner groups.
- The main gaps are in self-regulation and wellbeing, areas critical for sustaining professional effectiveness under pressure and avoiding burnout, which directly threatens the continuity of inclusive practices.
- Growth mindset is also a concern: only one third rate their competence as high, potentially limiting willingness to experiment with new inclusive approaches.
- Finally, gaps in managing one's own learning reduce the capacity to autonomously seek and integrate new knowledge on accessibility and inclusion, especially when time and resources are limited.

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Section 3
Results – Learners Questionnaire

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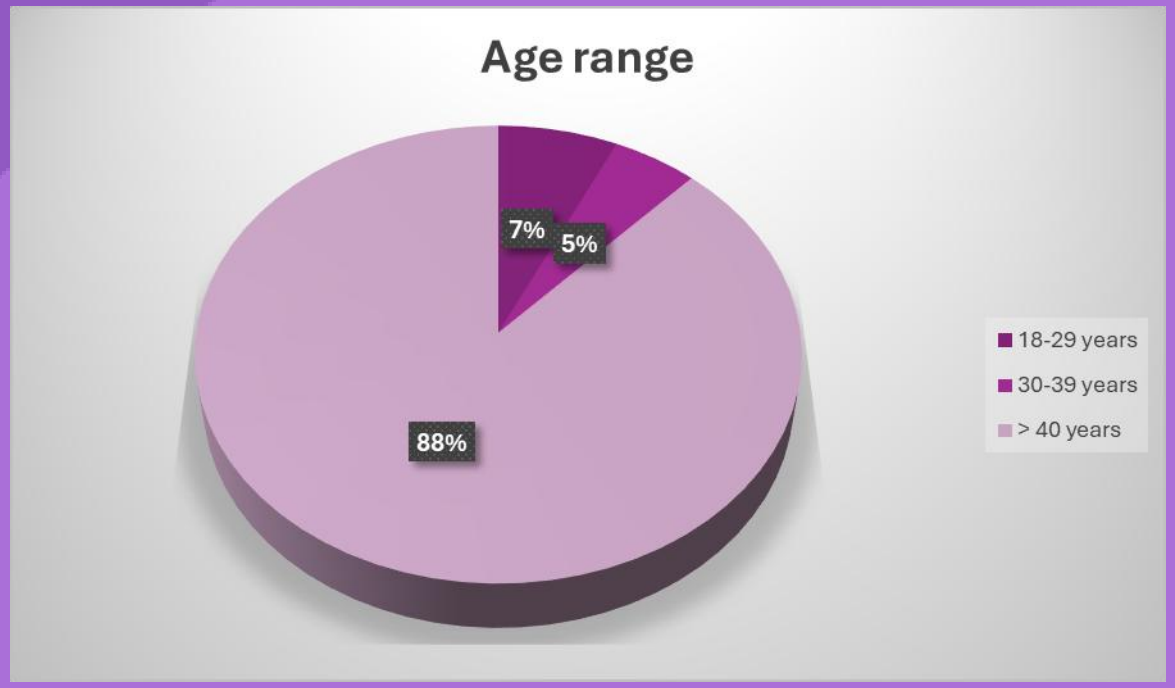
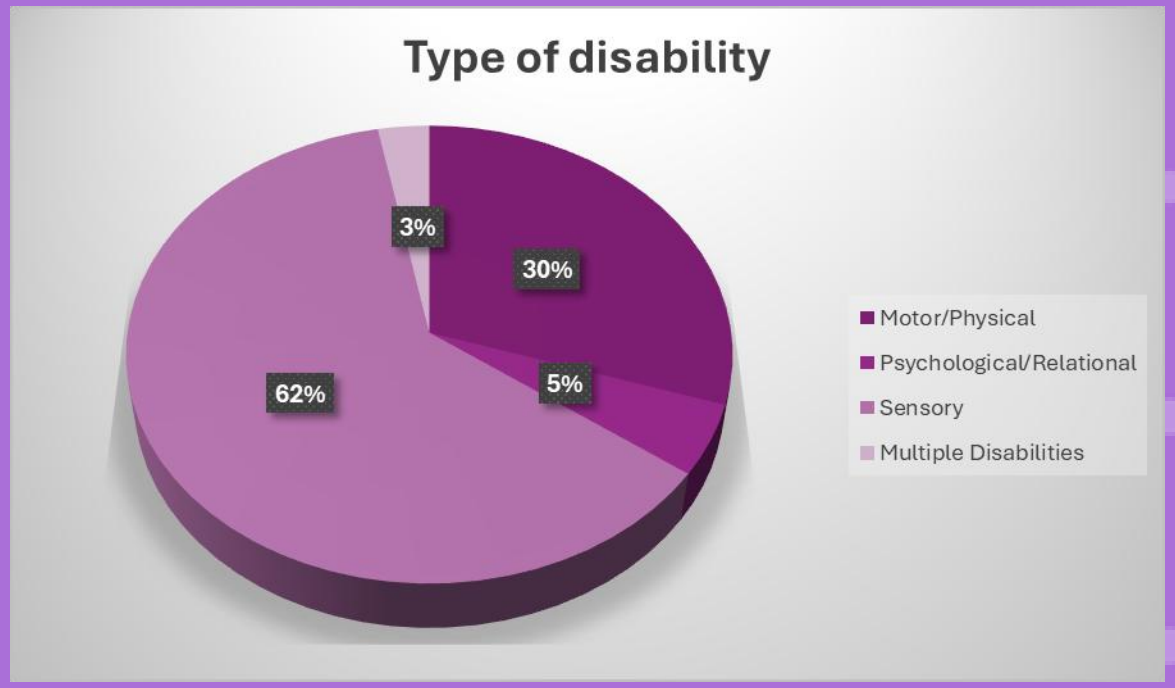
Respondents' Profile





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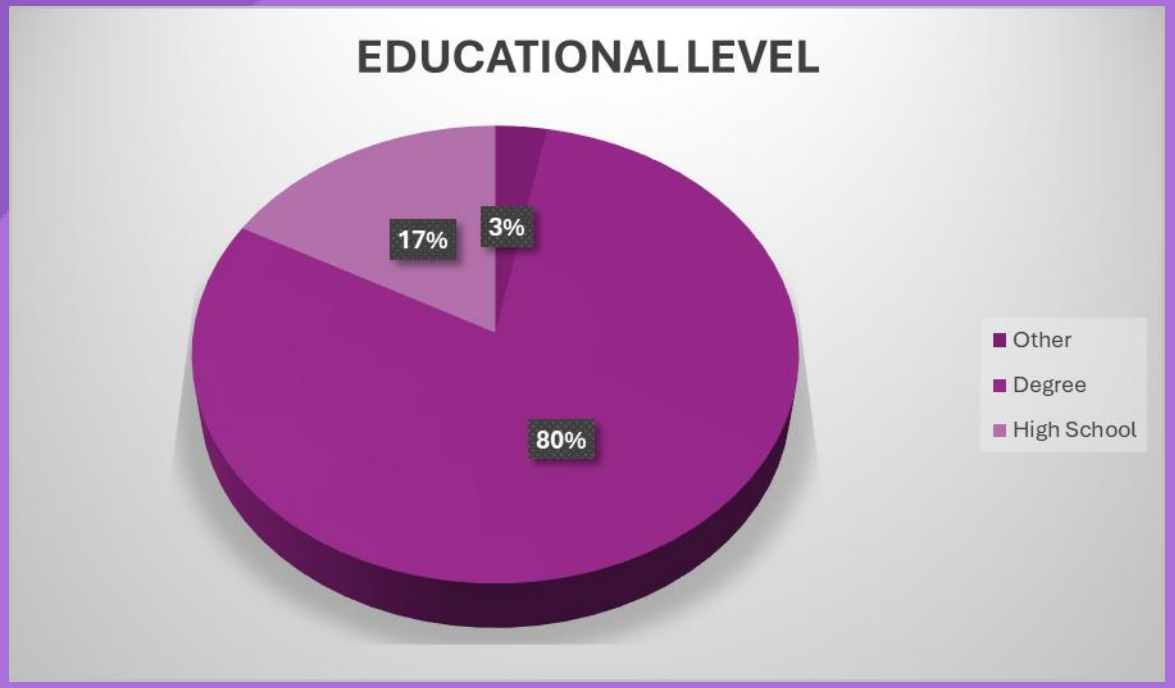

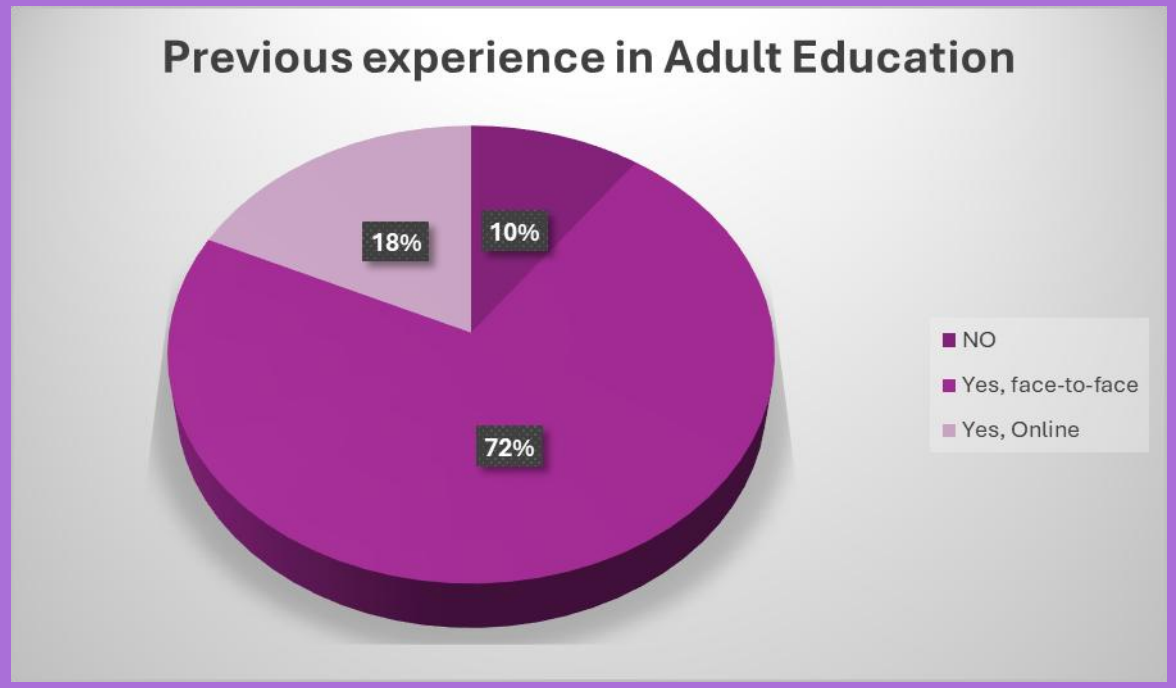

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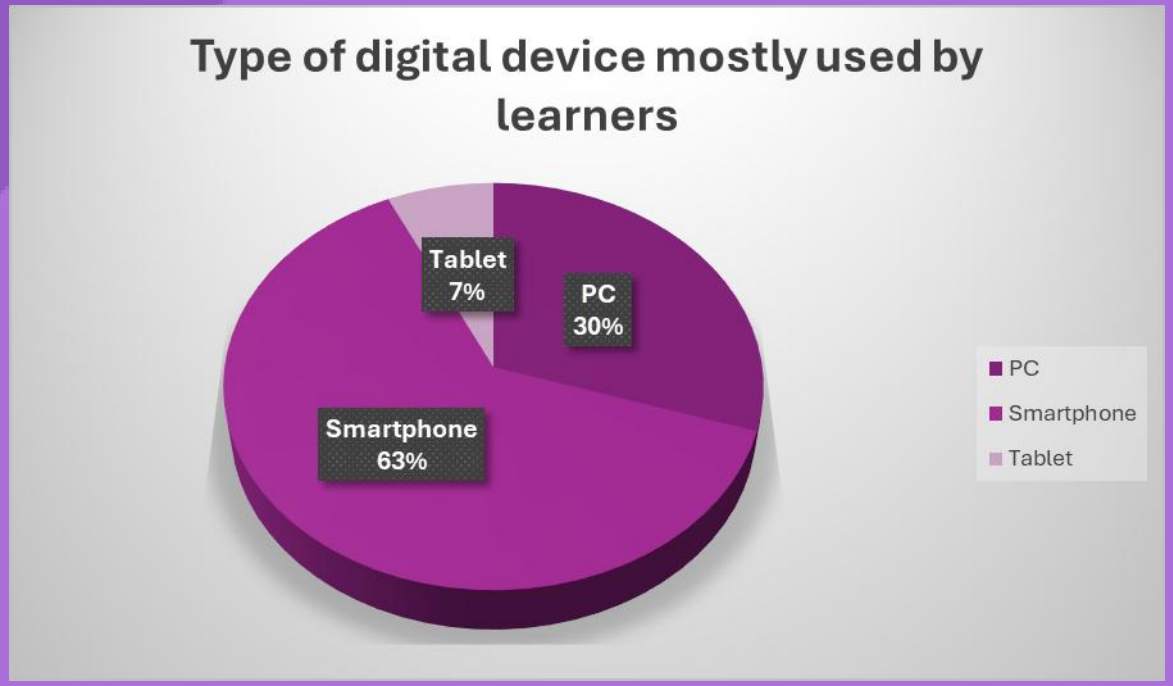

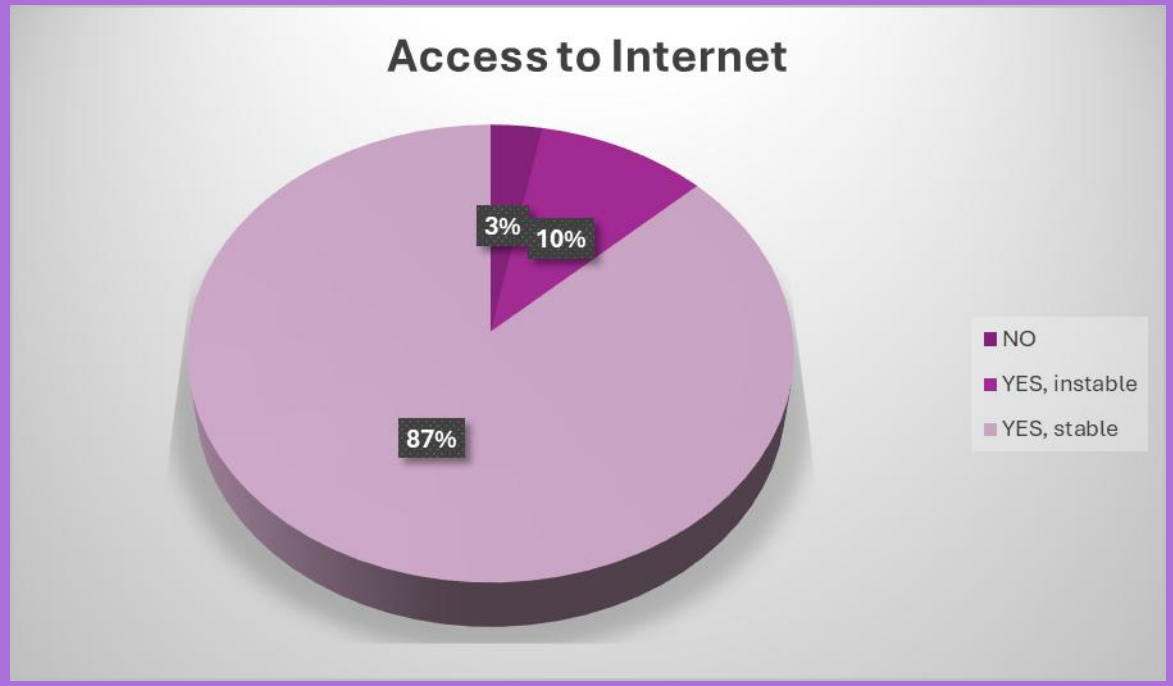

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Respondents' Profile

Key Insights:

- The sample is predominantly adults over 40 (88%), mainly with sensory disabilities (62%), followed by motor (30%). 80% hold a university degree, confirming that barriers to EdA participation are not linked to lack of prior education.
- Technology access is widespread (97% have internet, 87% stable), but the strong prevalence of smartphones (63%) over PCs (30%) may indicate limited digital literacy beyond basic consumption tasks.
- 90% have prior EdA experience, but only 18% through digital channels — suggesting that online learning formats are either unavailable, poorly promoted, or not perceived as accessible by this group.

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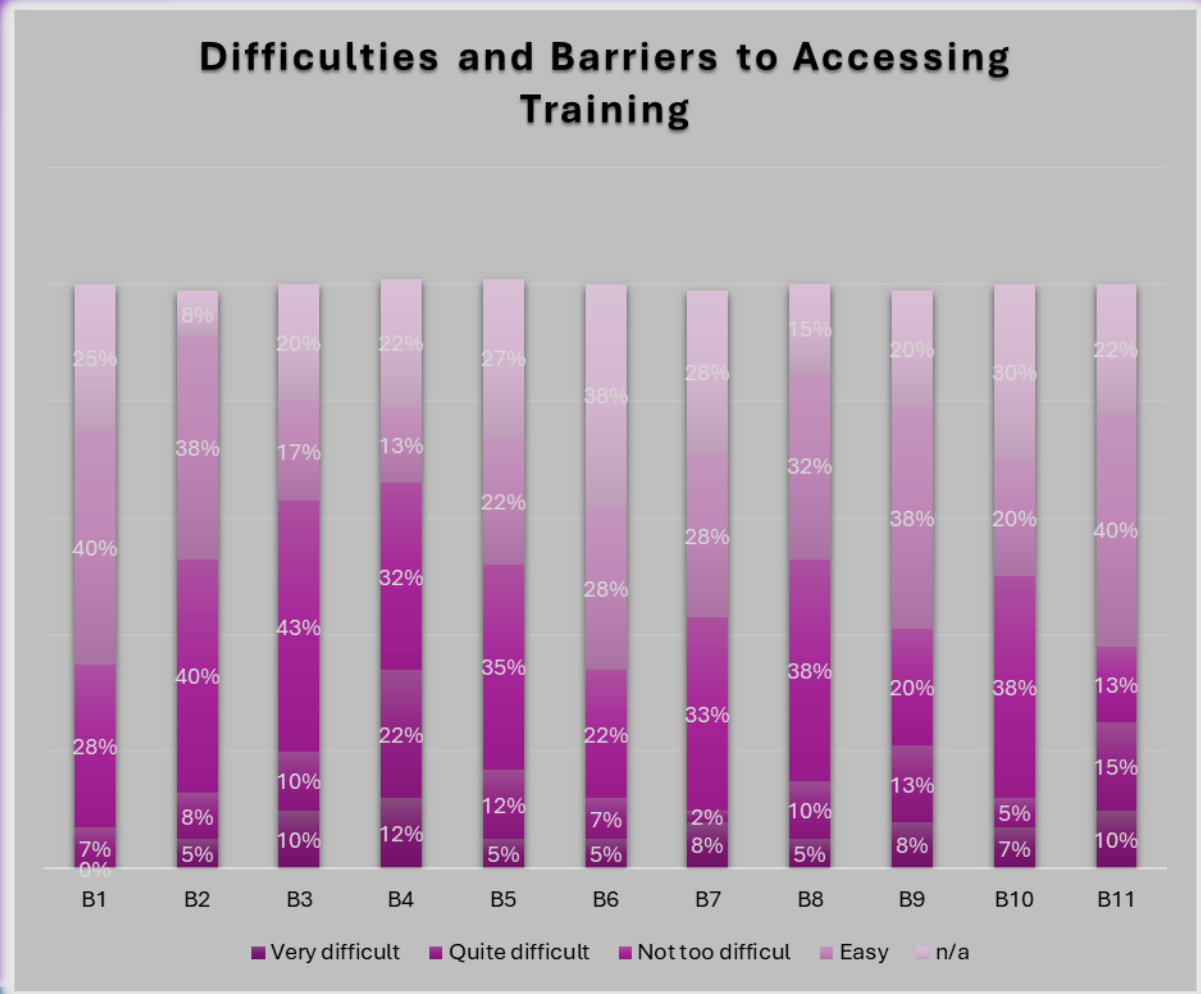
Difficulties and Barriers to Accessing Training



B1 – Physically reaching the locations

B2 – Difficulty using online learning platforms

B3 – Lack of subtitles, audio descriptions, or other aids

B4 – Financial problems that make it difficult to participate in courses

B5 – Lack of specific tutoring

B6 – Locations not accessible for disabilities

B7 – Educational materials not suitable for needs

B8 – Concentration during online/digital lessons

B9 – Lack of motivation or confidence

B10 – Not knowing about training opportunities

B11 – Perceiving Erasmus+ mobility as difficult

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Difficulties and Barriers to Accessing Training

Key Insights:

- 51% report needing no special support, reinforcing the priority of universal accessibility measures over individual assistance. Where needed, tutoring (17%) and mobility companions (12%) are most requested.

- Top barriers are financial constraints (34%), perceived difficulty of Erasmus+ mobility (25%), and lack of motivation/confidence (21%) — economic and psychological factors outweigh technical ones.

- Accessibility gaps (subtitles, aids, tutoring) affect a smaller but directly actionable share of respondents.

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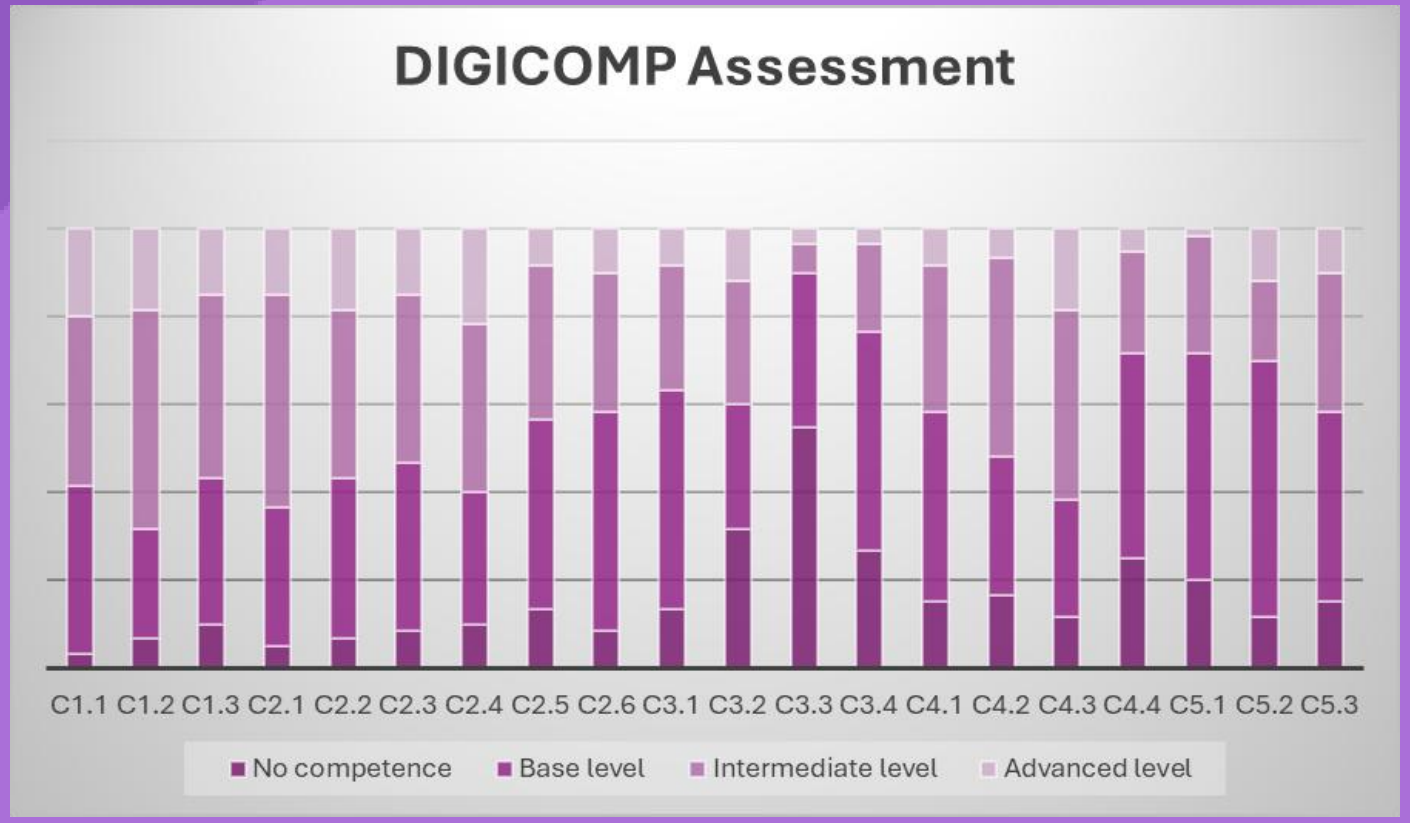
LEARNERS Digital Competence Areas



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LEARNERS Digital Competence Areas

DIGCOMP Learners – Strengths and Gaps:

- Learners show solid competences in information browsing, communication and collaboration (57–68% at intermediate/advanced level), consistent with their high smartphone usage and internet access.
- Severe gaps emerge in productive and advanced areas: programming (77%), technical problem solving (72%), identifying digital needs (70%), content creation (63%), and device protection (58%). Over half report no competence at all in copyright and licensing.
- The pattern is clear: learners can consume and interact with digital content, but lack skills to create, adapt, protect and troubleshoot it — with direct implications for autonomy and employability. This mirrors staff weaknesses, suggesting EdA programmes must go beyond basic digital literacy.

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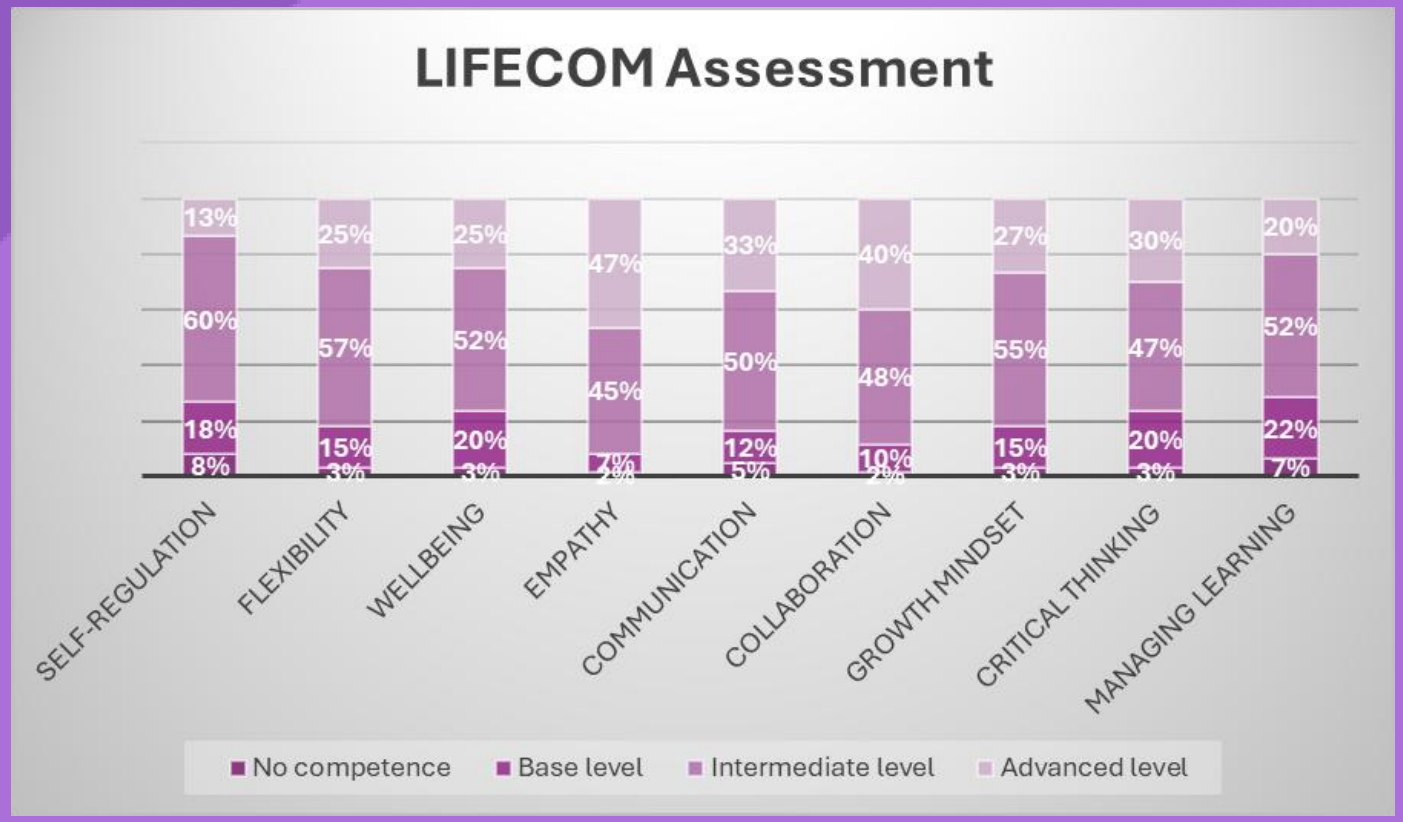
LEARNERS Life Competence Areas (LIFECOMP Framework)



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LEARNERS Life Competence Areas (LIFECOMP Framework)

LIFECOMP Learners – Strengths and Gaps:

- Learners express confidence in empathy, communication and collaboration — foundational strengths for group-based learning that EdA programmes can build upon.

- Key gaps emerge in managing learning (29%), self-regulation (26%), wellbeing and critical thinking (both 23%). These weaknesses can limit engagement with flexible or self-directed formats — precisely those offering the greatest inclusion potential — and may reflect the additional emotional challenges learners with disabilities face in educational settings.

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Comparative Conclusions: Staff EdA and Learners with Disabilities

Encouraging Base with Systemic Gaps

Considering their high educational background and technological access, learners have a solid foundation for digital or blended EdA, provided the content and environments are accessible. At the same time, staff demonstrate a positive attitude and willingness to support inclusion. Digital transformation is a viable means of promoting inclusion, given their strong Digicomp skills.

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Comparative Conclusions: Staff EdA and Learners with Disabilities

Main Convergences Between Staff and Learners

- **Accessibility of Content and Environments, Not Technology**: Learners report high difficulty with the lack of subtitles, audio descriptions, or other aids. Staff highlight significant gaps in knowledge regarding accessibility standards. There is a mismatch between usability and accessibility. The most significant barriers are the lack of inclusive content and inaccessible venues, rather than access to digital tools and the ability to “reach” the venue. Additionally, staff suffer from a lack of knowledge and skills in creating accessible content.

- **Economic Constraints as a Barrier**: Learners report financial barriers to participation, and staff see insufficient funding for equipment and support as a barrier. Accessibility must also be considered in economic terms, and the use of free or low-cost tools and solutions should be encouraged.

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Comparative Conclusions: Staff EdA and Learners with Disabilities

Main Convergences Between Staff and Learners

- **Motivation and Support for Erasmus+ Mobility**: Learners find Erasmus+ mobility difficult and report a lack of motivation/confidence. Participation in EdA and Erasmus+ requires a combined strategy: clear communication, guidance, support, and removal of practical barriers.

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Integrated Operational Recommendations

Accessible Venue Selection: Introduce minimum criteria and checklists to ensure venues are fully accessible.

Inclusive Digital and Blended Paths: Leverage the usability of digital platforms for learners, while ensuring content accessibility.

"Ready-to-Use" Accessibility Package for Staff: Provide / prepare **templates** for slides, documents, subtitles, transcripts, and examples based on **UDL** and accessibility standards.

Low-Cost Training and Free Tools: Select free or easily accessible tools, ensuring economic accessibility and the sustainability of small-scale solutions.

Motivation and Guidance for EdA and Erasmus+ Mobility: Develop clear messages, orientation paths, testimonials, and support services to reduce the perceived difficulty of mobility (55.5%) and enhance motivation and trust.

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Find more at https://digitalempowermentcampaign.eu/

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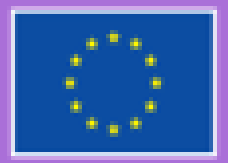
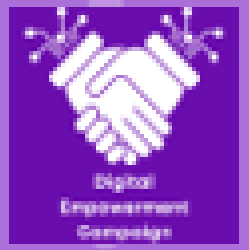
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