

Research Methodology and Feasibility Study Guide

DigiCreate Project – Intercultural Digital Dialogue and
Networking in Cultural and Creative Industries for Young People

*Work Package 2 (WP2) – Virtual Exchange Kick-Off: Validation
of DigiCreate Methodological Framework*



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1 INTRODUCTION

European Union programmes aim to foster inclusive growth, equal opportunities, and accessible learning and employment pathways for all. However, young people in the Cultural and Creative Industries (CCI) sector across Europe—especially those from rural, marginalized, and underrepresented backgrounds—face significant barriers. These include digital exclusion, financial constraints, and limited access to non-formal education or practical opportunities to develop their skills. The DigiCreate project responds to these challenges by enhancing access to high-quality digital education and promoting international virtual exchange among youth in the CCI sector through tailored tools and inclusive methodologies.

The Cultural and Creative Industries are among the most dynamic sectors in Europe, generating jobs at a faster rate than many others. In 2022, cultural employment grew by 4.5%, with over 8 million people employed in the CCI sector across the EU¹. Youth aged fifteen to twenty-nine constitute a higher share of this workforce compared to other sectors, underscoring the importance of targeted investments in this demographic. Despite this, young people—particularly those in rural areas or with fewer opportunities—often face unequal access to resources and learning pathways necessary for participation and success in the sector.

Barriers include limited broadband access (affecting roughly 15 - 25% of rural youth in some partner countries), insufficient digital skills, scarce non-formal learning opportunities, and financial difficulties that hinder participation in cultural education and professional development. For example, in Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina, young people in rural and marginalized communities represent about 30 – 40 % of the youth population but have disproportionately lower engagement in CCI activities². In Western European partners such as Germany, Spain, and Portugal, similar challenges persist among rural and socio-economically disadvantaged youth.

In response, EU policies increasingly promote virtual learning, intercultural dialogue, and inclusive access to digital tools as key strategies to boost youth employment and resilience in the creative economy. Initiatives such as the EU Youth Strategy³, the Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition⁴, and Erasmus+ Virtual Exchanges⁵ demonstrate this commitment to building an inclusive and digitally skilled youth workforce.

The role of this research is to systematically identify and analyze the specific needs, challenges, and training priorities faced by young people working or aspiring to work in the Cultural and Creative Industries (CCI) sector across six partner countries, ensuring that their diverse cultural, digital, and professional contexts are fully understood and addressed. It will provide an evidence-based foundation for developing inclusive and tailored training methodologies that address the unique cultural, digital, and professional contexts of youth. The research covers three Erasmus+ Programme Countries within the European Union—Germany, Spain, and

¹ <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/w/ddn-20230824-1>

² Bosnia and Herzegovina - <https://www.statista.com/statistics/811689/youth-unemployment-rate-in-bosnia-and-herzegovina/#:~:text=The%20youth%20unemployment%20rate%20in>

Montenegro - <https://www.undp.org/montenegro/projects/creative-montenegro>

³ https://youth.europa.eu/strategy_en

⁴ <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/digital-skills-coalition>

⁵ <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/programme-guide/part-b/key-action-1/virtual-exchanges>

Portugal—along with Serbia, an Erasmus+ Programme Country outside the EU but within the Western Balkans, as well as two Western Balkan Partner Countries, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

1.1 Rationale and Background

Education in the cultural and creative industries (CCI) sector must evolve to meet the fast-paced, digitally driven demands of today’s labor market. Traditional education systems often fall short in delivering the practical, entrepreneurial, and digital skills needed for sustainable careers in this field. As a result, young people—especially those from disadvantaged or rural backgrounds—struggle to access professional opportunities or actively participate in cultural production. Studies show that **82% of youth from lower socio-economic backgrounds do not even apply for jobs in the CCI sector due to financial constraints**⁶, while access to training is often concentrated in urban centers⁷.

Digital technology offers a promising solution. Online learning environments and virtual exchanges can bridge the skills gap, overcome geographic limitations, and provide more equitable access to high-quality education. However, to be effective, these tools must be embedded in a well-structured, inclusive, and needs-based methodology that reflects the diverse realities of youth across Europe.

Yet, increasing youth engagement in meaningful digital learning and community-driven creative initiatives remains a challenge across the Western Balkans and the EU. **Limited access to opportunities, digital infrastructure gaps, social exclusion, and a lack of tailored outreach strategies** contribute to low participation in non-formal education⁸.

OECD and national data reveal serious challenges across partner countries: youth unemployment rates remain high in **Spain (29.3%)**⁹, **Bosnia and Herzegovina (35.33%)**¹⁰, **Montenegro (30.23%)**¹¹, **Portugal (23.42%)**¹², and **Serbia (24.9%)**¹³, alongside a pressing need for the development of digital and intercultural skills—particularly in the CCI sector. Meanwhile, **Germany is facing a long-term shortage of skilled labor** due to demographic shifts and post-pandemic disruptions¹⁴.

⁶ <https://www.arts.ac.uk/about-ual/press-office/stories/exposure-doesnt-pay-the-bills-the-importance-of-living-wage-week-and-supporting-young-creatives>

⁷ <https://www.unesco.org/en/creative-cities>

⁸ https://www.scribd.com/document/787283571/EDU-WKP-2023-14-en?utm_source=chatgpt.com

⁹ https://ycharts.com/indicators/spain_youth_unemployment_rate_lfs#:~:text=Basic%20Info

¹⁰ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/811689/youth-unemployment-rate-in-bosnia-and-herzegovina/#:~:text=The%20youth%20unemployment%20rate%20in>

¹¹ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/812253/youth-unemployment-rate-in-montenegro/#:~:text=In%20total%2C%20the%20youth%20unemployment>

¹² <https://www.statista.com/statistics/812912/youth-unemployment-rate-in-portugal/#:~:text=Youth%20unemployment%20rate%20in%20Portugal%20in%202021&text=In%202021%2C%20the%20youth%20unemployment>

¹³ <https://tradingeconomics.com/serbia/youth-unemployment-rate>

¹⁴ https://kreativ-bund.de/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Impact_Report_COVID_19.pdf

To address these challenges, a mixed-method research process will be conducted to collect both quantitative and qualitative data on the needs, barriers, and aspirations of youth interested in the CCI sector, as well as the perspectives of youth workers, educators, and cultural practitioners. This approach will offer deeper and broader insight into current conditions and inform the development of the **DigiCreate Methodological Framework**, which will guide the creation of inclusive, engaging, and needs-based digital tools and virtual learning paths tailored to diverse youth subgroups.

The **DigiCreate consortium** brings together youth organizations, higher education institutions, and an SME from seven European countries—**Youth Power Germany EV (Germany)**, **Evolutionary Archetypes Consulting SL (Spain)**, **Contextos (Portugal)**, **Univerzitet Union Nikola Tesla (Serbia)**, **Udruzenje Okret – SPIN (Bosnia and Herzegovina)**, **NVO GLAS (Montenegro)**, **Univerzitet Crne Gore – UoM (Montenegro)**, and **Fakultet za Poslovnu Ekonomiju i Pravo Bar – FPEP Bar (Montenegro)**—to combine complementary expertise in youth empowerment, digital education, creative industries, and intercultural collaboration in delivering innovative, inclusive, and sustainable learning solutions for young creatives.

2 RESEARCH GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The DigiCreate research aims to gather comprehensive insights from young people involved in the creative industries, representing diverse backgrounds and experience levels within the cultural and creative industries (CCI) sector across six countries: Germany, Spain, Portugal, Serbia, Montenegro, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. This research will support the development of an evidence-based, tailored training methodology focused on enhancing intercultural dialogue and soft skills among young creatives.

The primary goal is to conduct surveys and online-facilitated focus group discussions (FGDs) to identify the key skill gaps, training needs, and challenges faced by youth in creative fields—especially in building intercultural competencies and essential soft skills such as communication, teamwork, and conflict resolution.

Key research questions include:

- a) What are the main skill gaps and training needs of young creatives, considering their employment history, income stability, career transition intentions, and the role of creativity in their personal and societal well-being?
- b) What individual and systemic barriers do young creatives encounter that hinder their professional growth, including challenges related to skills, market understanding, discrimination, and decision-making about professional development?
- c) What types of support, opportunities, and resources do young creatives use or seek, and how do these contribute to strengthening their soft skills, intercultural competencies, and ability to create social impact?

d) What forms of non-formal education and learning approaches do young creatives prefer for developing their skills, and what challenges do they encounter in accessing or engaging with such opportunities?

The collected data will be analyzed using thematic and content analysis methods to identify shared patterns and inform the design of a tailored, innovative training framework.

In addition, a feasibility study will be conducted to assess technological resources, availability, and target audience readiness, ensuring that the training programs and tools developed are practical and accessible for young creatives across these countries.

The findings from this research will directly inform DigiCreate’s training curricula, mentoring initiatives, and gamified learning approaches—fostering greater youth engagement, supporting career development, and promoting intercultural collaboration within the creative industries.

3 RESEARCH APPROACH AND DESIGN

The exploratory sequential mixed-methods approach will be used in this research. According to Creswell and Clark (2010) and Denzin (1970), mixed-method research integrates quantitative and qualitative approaches, methods, and concepts to gain a deeper and more comprehensive understanding, as well as to validate findings. Onwuegbuzie and Johnson (2004) emphasize that mixed methods provide a holistic understanding of phenomena by capturing real-life contexts, multiple perspectives, and cultural factors.

This research will employ an exploratory sequential design consisting of two phases: first, quantitative data will be collected and analyzed; second, qualitative data will be gathered to further explain and support the quantitative results.

Data will be collected directly from young creatives in the six target countries through online surveys and focus groups. Focus groups will include youth from diverse backgrounds within the creative and cultural industries (CCI) to explore their perceptions, experiences, and challenges in accessing education, training, and professional development opportunities. Desk research will also be conducted as a foundational component to gather and analyze relevant secondary data related to the creative sector and youth training needs.

The survey will be highly structured and detailed, offering multiple response options to comprehensively capture the experiences, skills, challenges, and preferences of young creatives. This design ensures consistent, quantifiable data across all partner countries and aims to collect original data to characterize a population too large for direct observation (Mouton, 1996). Surveys will be self-administered online, allowing participants to respond to structured questions about their experiences, skills, challenges, and training needs. According to O’Dwyer and Bernauer (2013)¹⁵, a survey is a method of collecting primary data directly from individuals, enabling researchers to gather systematic and standardized information from a broad sample.

¹⁵ O’Dwyer.,M. L; Bernauer., A.J(2013) Quantitative Research for the Qualitative Researcher.Second Edition

Focus groups, as described by Krueger (1994)¹⁶, are a qualitative research tool based on planned discussions designed to gather in-depth data on a specific topic from participants in a friendly, non-threatening environment. This supportive atmosphere strengthens the quality of the discussion and acts as a catalyst for rich data collection. Focus groups facilitate open and supportive discussions, allowing participants to share their barriers, motivations, and preferences regarding skill development and intercultural engagement more freely and authentically. This approach complements the survey by providing detailed qualitative insights into the lived experiences of young creatives.

Additionally, a feasibility study will be conducted to assess technological resources, availability, and readiness of the target audience, ensuring the practicality and accessibility of the training programs and tools developed. The study will evaluate existing opportunities and resources, technical and financial readiness, legal frameworks, stakeholder engagement, and potential risks. It will also provide tailored recommendations to ensure that the mentoring and training programs are practical, accessible, and well-adapted to the needs and capacities of the target youth populations in the creative industries. The feasibility study will be conducted following Creswell's (2014)¹⁷ approach to mixed-methods research, which emphasizes evaluating the practicality, acceptability, and readiness of proposed interventions before full implementation.

Together, the survey, focus groups, desk research, and feasibility study will provide complementary insights: quantitative data will outline key trends and patterns, while qualitative data will contextualize and deepen the understanding of young creatives' lived experiences, challenges, and support needs.

4 RESEARCH SETTING

The research will be conducted in six European countries, including three EU member states (Germany, Portugal, and Spain) and three countries from the Western Balkans (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Serbia). All listed Western Balkan countries have the status of EU candidate countries.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is a federal state with a highly decentralized political structure established by the Dayton Peace Agreement. It consists of two main entities: the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (subdivided into ten cantons) and Republika Srpska, along with the self-governing Brčko District. Each entity has its own government and significant autonomy, while certain powers are reserved for the state-level government. This results in a complex, multi-layered governance system in which both national and subnational authorities exercise substantial autonomous powers.

Montenegro is a unitary state, where the central government holds the majority of power, and regional authorities function under its jurisdiction. Serbia, in contrast, is a regionalized state, where political power has been largely decentralized to regional levels of government.

¹⁶ Krueger, R. A. (1994). *Focus group. A practical guide for applied research* (2nd ed.). London: Sage.

¹⁷ Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Germany is a federal parliamentary republic composed of sixteen federal states (Länder), each with its own constitution and government. Power is shared between national and state levels, with the Länder exercising authority in areas such as education, policing, and culture. Through the Bundesrat, the states also participate in federal legislation, ensuring structured shared governance.

Portugal is a unitary semi-presidential republic with a centralized government. Although some decentralization has occurred—mainly through municipalities and inter-municipal bodies—political power remains concentrated at the national level. Local authorities perform limited administrative functions without significant legislative autonomy.

Spain is formally a unitary parliamentary monarchy but operates under a highly decentralized model. It consists of seventeen autonomous communities and two autonomous cities, each with its own parliament and broad powers, particularly in education, health, and culture. Certain regions, such as Catalonia and the Basque Country, enjoy greater autonomy, resulting in an asymmetrical governance structure.

For the purpose of this research, each country will be analyzed through its administrative or cultural regions. Bosnia and Herzegovina will be represented by the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH), Republika Srpska (RS), and the Brčko District. Germany's federal structure includes states such as Bavaria, Baden-Württemberg, North Rhine-Westphalia, Berlin, Hamburg, Bremen, and Saxony—each with its own government and parliament, playing a key role in areas like education and security.

Montenegro is divided into three administrative regions—Northern, Central, and Coastal—which include cities like Bijelo Polje and Pljevlja (north), Podgorica and Nikšić (center), and Bar and Kotor (coast). While these regions lack autonomous governance, they are used for administrative planning purposes.

Portugal is organized into five main planning regions: Norte, Centro, Lisbon Region, Alentejo, and Algarve. Cities such as Porto, Coimbra, and Faro fall within these regions, which are relevant for coordination and EU statistical frameworks, although power remains centralized.

Serbia, although officially a unitary state, includes decentralized elements such as the autonomous province of Vojvodina, the distinct status of Belgrade, and broader statistical regions like Šumadija and Western Serbia, and Southern and Eastern Serbia. These regions help organize governance and service delivery but do not possess legislative independence.

Spain will be represented by autonomous communities such as Catalonia, Madrid, Andalusia, and the Valencian Community. Each of these has its own parliament and is responsible for key sectors, contributing to Spain's highly decentralized governance model.

This regional approach enables a comparative analysis of governance, decentralization, and youth access to opportunities in the creative sector across different socio-political contexts.

4.1 The Theoretical Framework

This research adopts a multi-layered socio-ecological framework to analyze skill gaps among youth and emerging professionals in the creative and cultural industries (CCI), with a focus on

soft skills and intercultural competencies. Drawing from Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory and contemporary applications in workforce development, the framework explores how individual attributes interact with social, institutional, and structural factors to shape the development or lack of essential competencies.

The framework encompasses four interrelated levels:

1. **Personal Level** – This level includes individual characteristics such as age, gender, education, socio-economic background, motivation, and prior learning experiences. These factors directly influence a young person's ability to acquire and apply soft skills (e.g., communication, collaboration, adaptability, creative problem-solving) and intercultural competencies (e.g., cultural empathy, global awareness, cross-cultural communication).
2. **Meso Level** – Refers to the influence of peer networks, mentorship, educational institutions, and local creative communities. These social environments provide or restrict access to learning opportunities, role models, and community-based engagement essential for skill-building and professional development.
3. **Exo Level** – Includes external systems that indirectly affect youth, such as employer practices, industry structures, support organizations, and local infrastructure for creative industries. These determine the availability and accessibility of professional training, internships, and career pathways within the creative sector.
4. **Macro Level** – Encompasses broader cultural norms, economic policies, and global industry trends that influence education systems, labor markets, and societal expectations around creativity, innovation, and intercultural engagement. These systemic factors often define what kinds of skills are valued and how opportunities are distributed.

This theoretical approach supports a holistic understanding of how skill gaps emerge and persist across different socio-economic and cultural contexts. It guides the research in identifying both structural barriers and enablers that affect youth engagement in the creative industries.

An **exploratory sequential mixed-methods design** will be employed. In the first phase, quantitative data will be collected via structured online surveys to capture broad patterns in youth skills, experiences, and challenges. In the second phase, qualitative data will be gathered through focus groups with diverse young creatives to deepen understanding of lived experiences, needs, and expectations related to training and development.

Complementary **desk research** will provide context through literature reviews, policy analysis, and market mapping, while a **feasibility study** will assess the readiness and accessibility of training tools and platforms. Together, these methods will generate a comprehensive evidence base to inform future educational and policy interventions aimed at strengthening youth skills in the CCI sector.

5 THE RESEARCH POPULATION AND SAMPLE

In this mixed-methods research, determining the sample size requires balancing methodological rigor with contextual relevance to the realities of the creative sector. The

research will be conducted across six countries—Germany, Portugal, Spain, Montenegro, Serbia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina—targeting approximately **600 participants through an online questionnaire** (about 100 respondents per country) and **90 participants in 6 locally organized focus groups** (with 15 participants per country).

The primary research population includes **young people aged 18–30**, with varying levels of experience and engagement in the creative industries. This includes:

- Those already **professionally active** in the creative sector (employed, self-employed, or freelancing),
- Those who have completed relevant education or training and are currently **seeking work or freelance opportunities**, and
- Those who are in the **early stages of exploring creative careers**, such as students, self-taught creatives, or individuals developing portfolios.

Participants will represent a broad range of creative disciplines, including but not limited to **design, architecture, visual arts, music, performance, and media**. National partner organizations (NGOs and universities) will facilitate recruitment, leveraging their local knowledge and networks to ensure balanced representation across urban and rural regions, as well as different cultural and educational backgrounds. This aspect is especially important for the **Western Balkan countries**, where local disparities in infrastructure and access to creative education are more pronounced.

5.1 The Sampling Criteria

To ensure the inclusion of a diverse and relevant sample, the following criteria will guide participant selection:

- **Age Range:**
Participants must be between **18 and 30 years of age**.
- **Geographical Location:**
Participants must be **residents of the country** where the research activity (survey or focus group) is conducted. In the case of the Western Balkans, additional attention will be given to **including participants from smaller towns and non-central regions** to better reflect regional disparities and access to the creative sector. For example, in Montenegro, regions will be stratified as Northern, Central, and Coastal; similarly detailed regional stratifications apply in other countries.
- **Experience Levels:**
The sample will purposefully include individuals from all three engagement levels:
 1. **Active professionals** in the creative industries (employed, self-employed, or freelance),
 2. **Job seekers** with prior training or education in creative fields,
 3. **Early-stage creatives**, such as students, emerging freelancers, or self-taught individuals building their first portfolios.
- **Field Diversity:**
Each focus group will aim to include at least **one representative per major creative subfield**, such as:
 - 2D/3D design,
 - Architecture and spatial planning,

- Videography and media production,
- Performing arts,
- Physical art forms (painting, sculpture, graffiti),
- Audio production,
- Interdisciplinary or hybrid creative practices.
- **Educational Background:**
Participants will be included regardless of their **formal education level**, ranging from incomplete primary education to doctoral studies, as well as those with **informal or non-formal learning experiences**.
- **Skills Development Interest:**
Preference will be given to individuals who are **actively engaged** in professional or creative skills development, or those who **express a clear interest** in acquiring such skills, including soft skills such as communication, collaboration, and entrepreneurship.
- **Diversity and Inclusion**
Participants identifying with marginalized or underrepresented groups—such as ethnic minorities, women in male-dominated fields, LGBTQ+, people with disabilities, economically disadvantaged backgrounds, and similar—will be included as a specific criterion to ensure diverse and inclusive representation in the study.

6 DATA COLLECTION

6.1 Data Collection Instruments

6.1.1 Desk Research

Desk research was selected as one of the data collection instruments for the DigiCreate project. It involves the systematic review and analysis of existing reports, statistical data, policy documents, and literature relevant to young people in the Creative and Cultural Industries (CCI).

Each partner organization will conduct desk research in their respective country—Germany, Spain, Portugal, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and Montenegro (with the three Montenegrin partners working jointly). All partners will use the same structure and guidelines to ensure consistency in scope and direction. Each organization will submit their desk research summary in English.

6.1.1.1 Desk Research Structure

The aim of this structure is to help partner organizations collect and summarize key facts about the situation of youth (aged 18–30) in the CCI sector in their countries. The focus is on access to education, employment, participation, and inclusion.

1. General Situation of the CCI Sector and Youth Involvement

- What does the creative and cultural sector look like in your country?
- How are young people involved (e.g., working, studying, freelancing, or creating in CCI)?

- Are there available statistics or national reports?

2. Education and Skill Development

- What creative education and training opportunities exist for youth?
- Are there specific challenges (e.g., digital exclusion, financial barriers, or access for rural youth)?
- Are there informal learning spaces, online courses, or programs for youth?

3. Mobility and Access

- Can young people from rural or remote areas access education or work in CCI?
- Are there regional inequalities or infrastructure-related barriers?

4. Employment and Skills

- What creative jobs are available to youth?
- What challenges do they face (e.g., freelance instability, low pay)?
- Are there identified skill gaps (digital, soft, entrepreneurial)?

5. Policies and Institutions

- Are there national or local policies that support youth in the creative sector?
- Which institutions or organizations are involved?
- Include key stakeholders (ministries, NGOs, schools, cultural organizations).

6. Inclusion and Accessibility

- Are there initiatives supporting marginalized youth (e.g., Roma, migrants, women, youth with disabilities)?
- What are the main barriers to participation, and how are they being addressed?

6.1.2 Online/Web questionnaire

Following the desk research phase, an **online questionnaire** was selected as the primary quantitative data collection tool to ensure broad, inclusive, and accessible participation across the six partner countries—Germany, Portugal, Spain, Montenegro, Serbia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The survey aims to collect insights directly from young people (aged 18–30) who are active or interested in the cultural and creative industries (CCI). Using a user-friendly online platform (e.g., Google Forms), the survey is expected to reach around 600 respondents (approximately 100 per country), ensuring a diverse and representative sample.

Each partner organization will translate and adapt the questionnaire into the local language and distribute it through various channels, including organizational websites, social media platforms, mailing lists, and relevant youth and CCI networks. This approach ensures

participation from both urban and rural areas, reaching individuals with different backgrounds and levels of access.

The questionnaire is structured as a series of online questions aimed at capturing key information about:

- respondents' backgrounds, aspirations, and current involvement in CCI;
- challenges in accessing education, resources, or employment;
- available or missing support systems;
- the role of creativity in identity, community, and social change;
- and needs for soft skills development and intercultural collaboration.

The questionnaire takes approximately 12–15 minutes to complete. All responses are recorded automatically in a secure database, enabling efficient sorting and analysis. Researchers from each participating country will personally process and analyze their national responses, contributing to both national and comparative insights.

Key features and advantages of the online questionnaire:

- **Anonymous participation:** Respondents are not asked to provide names or personally identifiable data.
- **Consistency and comparability:** All participants receive the same version of the questionnaire, ensuring a uniform and unbiased format.
- **Standardized structure:** Most questions are closed-ended, which simplifies comparison and statistical analysis.
- **Wide reach and accessibility:** The digital format allows individuals to participate quickly and conveniently from any location with internet access.
- **High response rate:** The availability of the online form at all times and its ease of access support higher levels of engagement.

All collected data will be securely stored and used exclusively for research, training development, and public advocacy efforts aimed at improving access to resources, well-being, visibility, and fair opportunities for young creatives across Europe and the Western Balkans.

6.1.2.1 Online questionnaire structure

Title: Welcome to the DigiCreate Survey!

Section 1 - Introduction:

Thank you for participating in this survey!

This questionnaire is part of the Erasmus+ project DigiCreate, a 36-month international initiative tackling challenges faced by young people in the creative and cultural industries — including high unemployment, limited intercultural competencies, and the digital divide.

DigiCreate brings together 8 partner organizations from 6 countries — Germany, Spain, Portugal, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro — to co-create innovative, inclusive, and practical solutions. This project is co-funded by the European Union through the

Erasmus+ programme. The views and opinions expressed are those of the authors only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

The insights gathered will help shape support programs, training opportunities, and public advocacy efforts focused on improving access to resources, mental well-being, visibility, and fair opportunities for emerging creatives.

Whether you are just starting your journey or already have experience in your field, your voice matters.

This survey will explore:

- your background, aspirations, and experiences in creative work,
- the obstacles you face and support you may or may not have received,
- how creativity connects to identity, culture, and social impact,
- and what kind of soft skills and intercultural collaboration opportunities would help you thrive.

It takes about 12–15 minutes to complete. Your responses are anonymous and will be used only for research, learning, and advocacy purposes within the project.

We deeply appreciate your time and honesty. Let's co-create better conditions for the next generation of creatives!

Section 2 – Demography (All Participants)

1. What is your age?

(Please select one option from the given ranges)

- a) 18 - 21 (Late high school / early university years)
- b) 22 - 24 (Late university years / early employment stages)
- c) 25-27 (Early employment stages)
- d) 27-30 (Early adulthood years)

2. What region/province do you currently live in?

(Choose based on the administrative or cultural region; city names are included in parentheses)

Note: Each country should list only its own regions, not those of other participating countries.

A. Montenegro

- a) Northern Region (Bijelo Polje, Berane, Pljevlja, Rožaje, Andrijevica, Gusinje, Mojkovac, Žabljak, Plav, Plužine)
- b) Central Region (Podgorica, Zeta, Nikšić, Danilovgrad, Cetinje, Šavnik, Tuzi)
- c) Coastal Region (Bar, Budva, Herceg Novi, Kotor, Tivat, Ulcinj)

B. Serbia

- a) Vojvodina (Novi Sad, Subotica, Sombor, Zrenjanin, Pančevo, Kikinda, Senta, Vrbas, Bačka Palanka, Bečej)
- b) Belgrade Region (Belgrade, Obrenovac, Zemun, Grocka, Mladenovac, Lazarevac)
- c) Šumadija and Western Serbia (Kragujevac, Čačak, Kraljevo, Užice, Valjevo, Aranđelovac, Požega, Gornji Milanovac)
- d) Southern and Eastern Serbia (Niš, Leskovac, Vranje, Zaječar, Pirot, Prokuplje, Bor, Aleksinac, Knjaževac)

C. Bosnia and Herzegovina

- a) Federation of BiH – Sarajevo Canton (Sarajevo, Ilidža, Vogošća, Hadžići, Ilijaš, Trnovo)
- b) Federation of BiH – Other Regions (Mostar, Tuzla, Bihać, Zenica, Goražde, Livno, Travnik, Orašje, Gradačac)
- c) Republika Srpska (Banja Luka, Prijedor, Bijeljina, Trebinje, Doboј, Zvornik, Foča, Gradiška)
- d) Brčko District (Brčko)

D. Germany

- a) Bavaria (München, Nürnberg, Augsburg, Regensburg, Würzburg, Ingolstadt, Fürth, Erlangen, Bamberg)
- b) Baden-Württemberg (Stuttgart, Mannheim, Karlsruhe, Freiburg, Heidelberg, Ulm, Heilbronn, Reutlingen)
- c) North Rhine-Westphalia (Cologne, Düsseldorf, Dortmund, Essen, Duisburg, Bochum, Wuppertal, Bielefeld, Bonn)
- d) Berlin Region (Berlin, Potsdam)
- e) Other Bundesländer (Hamburg, Bremen, Hannover, Dresden, Leipzig, Mainz, Saarbrücken, Kiel, Magdeburg)

E. Portugal

- a) Norte (Porto, Braga, Guimarães, Vila Real, Viana do Castelo, Bragança)
- b) Centro (Coimbra, Aveiro, Leiria, Viseu, Castelo Branco, Guarda)
- c) Lisbon Region (Lisboa, Setúbal, Sintra, Almada, Oeiras, Cascais, Amadora)
- d) Alentejo (Évora, Beja, Sines)
- e) Algarve (Faro, Portimão, Lagos)

F. Spain

- a) Catalonia (Barcelona, Tarragona, Girona, Lleida, Reus, Manresa, Sabadell, Terrassa)
- b) Madrid Region (Madrid, Alcalá de Henares, Getafe, Leganés, Móstoles, Fuenlabrada)
- c) Andalusia (Seville, Málaga, Granada, Córdoba, Cádiz, Almería, Huelva, Jaén)
- d) Valencian Community (Valencia, Alicante, Castellón de la Plana, Elche, Gandía, Torrevieja)
- e) Other Regions (Bilbao, A Coruña, Vigo, Valladolid, Zaragoza, Murcia, Palma, San Sebastián, Las Palmas)

3. Gender (Select one)

- a) Male

- b) Female
- c) Non-binary
- d) Prefer not to say

4. Highest Level of Education

(Please select the one you are currently pursuing or the highest title you have achieved)

- a) I have not completed primary education
- b) Primary education
- c) Lower secondary education (e.g. middle school)
- d) Upper secondary education (e.g. high school, vocational school)
- e) Currently enrolled in undergraduate studies (Bachelor level)
- f) Bachelor's degree
- g) Currently enrolled in postgraduate studies (Master level)
- h) Master's degree
- i) Currently enrolled in doctoral studies (PhD)
- j) Doctoral degree (PhD)

5. Please select the subcategorization of the career path within the creative industry that you are pursuing/intending to pursue

(If not explicitly listed please select the one you feel most closely resembles it)

- a) 2D Design (graphic design, illustration, branding, social media visuals, print, UI/UX)
- b) 3D & Product Design (3D modeling, animation, industrial or textile design, virtual environments)
- c) Architecture & Spatial Design (architecture, interior/exterior design, urban and landscape planning)
- d) Visual & Fine Arts (drawing, painting, sculpture, installations, graffiti, mixed media)
- e) Audio Production (music production, sound design, DJ-ing, podcasting, radio)
- f) Film & Video (filmmaking, directing, video editing, cinematography, animation, reels/content)
- g) Performing Arts (theatre, acting, dance, performance, live music, comedy)
- h) Crafts & Artisan Work (handicrafts, pottery, traditional crafts, jewelry, wood/leather work)
- i) Creative Writing & Literature (fiction, poetry, screenwriting, copywriting, storytelling)
- j) Languages & Linguistic Creativity (translation, multilingual writing, creative interpretation)
- k) Culinary Arts (gastronomy, food styling, recipe creation, culinary culture)
- l) Heritage, Museums & Curation (museology, curation, restoration, cultural tourism)
- m) Game Design & Interactive Media (game development, concept art, storytelling, world-building)
- n) Digital & Creative Technology (creative coding, AI in arts, AR/VR, web/app development)
- o) Fashion & Costume Design (clothing design, costume creation, accessories, sustainable fashion)
- p) Photography (art, documentary, portrait, fashion, journalism, editing)
- q) Publishing & Editorial (editing, publishing, book/media design, literary work)
- r) Marketing & Creative Communications (branding, campaigns, content creation, PR)
- s) Cultural Management (project management, event/festival production, cultural policy)

t) Arts Education & Community Work (facilitation, creative pedagogy, community-based arts)

6. Do you identify with any marginalized or underrepresented group in the creative field? (*Select all that apply*)

- a) I belong to an ethnic or racial minority
- b) I belong to the Roma community
- c) I belong to a national minority
- d) I identify as LGBTQ+
- e) I live with a disability (physical, sensory, intellectual, or mental health-related)
- f) I am a refugee, displaced person, or migrant
- g) I come from a low-income background or economically disadvantaged area
- h) I am a woman in a male-dominated creative field
- i) I am a former or current substance user
- j) I am a former or current incarcerated person
- k) I don't identify with any specific group, but I feel socially or professionally marginalized
- l) I do not identify with any marginalized or underrepresented group
- m) Prefer not to answer

7. Do you have previous relevant working experience in the field? (*Select one*)

- a) Yes
- b) No

Technical instructions for using the Google Forms feature:

When creating this question, click on the three vertical dots (:) in the bottom right corner of the question box. A small menu will appear — select the second option, “Go to section based on answer.”

Then, above:

- For the “Yes” option, choose “Next section”
- For the “No” option, select “Section 4”

Next, scroll to the bottom of Section 3. You'll see the option “After section 3, go to...”. Click on the dropdown and select Section 5.

This will ensure that respondents who answered “Yes” will not be redirected to the questions intended for those who answered “No,” and everything else will continue as planned from that point onward.

Section 3 - For Participants with Creative Work Experience

(Displayed if respondent has relevant work experience – Question 7 = “Yes”)

8. How many years of previous experience do you have in the relevant field(s)? (*Select one*)

- a) Less than 1 year
- b) 1-2 years

- c) 3-5 years
- d) 6 – 10 years
- e) 10+

9. How many months did it approximately take you to attain your first employment (or first project to work on as a freelancer) since you started to actively look for it? (Select one)

- a) < 1 months
- b) 1 – 3 months
- c) 3 – 6 months
- d) 6 - 12 months
- e) > 1 year

10. What best describes your current work and income situation in the creative sector? (Please select the one that most closely reflects your current status)

- a) Full-time employed in a creative role, with stable income
- b) Part-time or freelance in a creative role, with somewhat stable income
- c) Freelancer/self-employed in creative work, but income is unstable
- d) I do creative work occasionally (project-based or honorarium), with low or irregular income
- e) I'm actively looking for work in the creative sector (registered or not with Employment Office)
- f) I work informally in creative jobs (no contract, no registration)
- g) I currently do not earn from creative work
- h) Employed in a non-creative job, but interested in creative opportunities

11. What is your average monthly income from your creative work? (Select one)

(Please estimate your total earnings from creative-related activities over the past 6 months and choose the range that best describes your average monthly income. If your income fluctuates significantly, give your best estimate)

- a) I do not earn income from creative work
- b) Less than €200
- c) €200 – €500
- d) €501 – €800
- e) €801 – €1,200
- f) €1,201 – €2,000
- g) More than €2,000
- h) Prefer not to say

12. What is your main source of income? (Select one)

- a) Creative work (employment or freelance)
- b) Non-creative job(s)
- c) Temporary or honorarium-based projects
- d) Social support (e.g., unemployment benefits, welfare, disability benefits)
- e) Family or partner support
- f) Scholarships or educational grants
- g) Informal or casual work (without formal contract)
- h) Remittances from relatives abroad
- i) Prefer not to say

13. What do you consider to be the biggest obstacle(s) in your own professional development so far? (Multiple answers allowed)

- a) Lack of technical skills or proficiency in industry-leading tools
- b) Inadequate understanding of market needs
- c) Lack of soft skills (e.g. communication, teamwork, time management)
- d) Unfamiliarity with new technologies that bring competitive advantage
- e) Limited access to mentorship or professional networks
- f) Lack of financial support
- g) Mental health challenges or emotional burnout
- h) Limited access to educational or training opportunities
- i) Low recognition of creative professions in your environment
- j) Discrimination or bias based on gender, ethnicity, or background
- k) Bureaucratic or legal barriers (e.g. complex procedures for freelancing, starting a business, etc.)
- l) Inadequate national policies or laws supporting the creative sector
- m) High taxation or lack of social protection for freelance/independent creatives
- n) Language barriers (primarily little or no knowledge of English as the globally recognized language of communication) limiting access to opportunities or effective communication
- o) Lack of self-confidence or fear of failure
- p) Poor access to reliable information or resources
- q) Corruption or unethical practices within the industry or institutions
- r) Exploitation or unfair treatment by employers, clients, or intermediaries
- s) Lack of personal support or encouragement from friends, family, or community

14. What kind of support have you received for your creative work? Who were the main sources? (Select all that apply; multiple choices allowed)

- a) I received financial support (grants, sponsorships, crowdfunding) from public institutions (e.g., ministry, municipality, cultural office)
- b) I received financial support from private foundations, donors, or individual sponsors
- c) I received mentorship or professional guidance from independent mentors, creative professionals, or professional associations/unions
- d) I participated in training or educational programs (courses, workshops, boot camps) organized by universities, educational institutions, incubators, or accelerators
- e) I had access to materials or equipment (tools, studio space, software) provided by NGOs, civil society organizations, or private companies
- f) I benefited from networking opportunities (events, communities, professional groups) including peer or community creative networks, collectives, or online platforms (e.g., Patreon, Behance, Etsy)
- g) I had collaboration opportunities (projects with other creatives) through professional associations, unions, or community networks
- h) I received marketing or promotion support from private companies, corporate sponsors, or online platforms
- i) I received technical assistance (IT support, platform setup) from NGOs, incubators, or private companies
- j) I received legal or administrative support (contracts, copyright, business setup) from public institutions or professional associations

- k) I received emotional or psychological support (peer groups, counselling) often from friends, family, or personal networks
- l) I had volunteer support or help from friends, family, or personal networks
- m) I did everything independently, without any support
- n) I have not yet had the opportunity to seek support

15. For which of the following purposes have you used your creative work as a tool?

(Multiple answers allowed)

- a) To express personal or cultural identity
- b) To promote cultural diversity and intercultural understanding
- c) To raise awareness about social or environmental issues
- d) To advocate for human rights or social justice
- e) To support mental health and emotional wellbeing (e.g., coping with stress)
- f) To engage and mobilize communities
- g) To educate or inform others
- h) To preserve cultural heritage or traditions
- i) To create opportunities for collaboration across cultures
- j) To challenge stereotypes or discrimination
- k) To generate income or professional opportunities
- l) To build networks or professional connections
- m) To influence public opinion or policy change
- n) To inspire or mentor others
- o) To foster innovation or experimentation
- p) To document or archive community stories and experiences
- q) To participate in cultural or artistic events and festivals
- r) To increase visibility or recognition in your field
- s) To strengthen community resilience or solidarity
- t) To celebrate milestones, events, or identity
- u) To explore or experiment with new creative techniques or media

16. Are you currently considering transitioning into another role within the creative field or beyond? (Select one)

- a) Yes, I am considering transitioning into a completely different creative role
- b) Yes, I am considering transitioning into a somewhat similar creative role
- c) Yes, I am considering transitioning into a role outside of the creative field
- d) I am not sure
- e) No, I want to build my career in the current role

17. What mostly shapes your professional decisions and creative approach? (Multiple choices allowed)

- a) Personal interests, values, and experience gained through practice
- b) Consulting colleagues, role models, and examples of successful individuals I observe online or offline
- c) Following opportunities and knowledge from formal education
- d) Keeping up with market trends and demands (e.g., client needs, digital presence)
- e) Experiences working in multicultural environments
- f) Collaboration and idea exchange with others
- g) Feedback I receive through practice
- h) Inspiration from other fields (e.g., music, film, social changes)

i) Technical skills and tools I use

18. What is your greatest motivation to continue developing your creative skills and career? (*Select one*)

- a) Personal growth and satisfaction
- b) Professional success and recognition
- c) Financial security and better income
- d) Opportunity to contribute to my community and society
- e) Chance for international collaboration and experience

Section 4 - For Participants Without Creative Work Experience

(Displayed if respondent does not have work experience - Question 7 = “No”)

8. What are your career aspirations within the creative field?

(*Select one*)

- a) Work as a freelancer or self-employed
- b) Work for a creative company, studio, or agency
- c) Start my own creative business or brand
- d) Work in a public or non-profit cultural institution (e.g. museum, theatre, NGO)
- e) Become an educator or trainer in the creative field
- f) Focus on independent artistic production (e.g. exhibiting, performing, publishing)
- g) Combine creative work with another profession or income source
- h) I'm not sure yet
- i) Continue creative work as a hobby or side project only
- j) Transition out of the creative field to another career
- k) Take a break before deciding on a creative path

9. What best describes your current employment or education status?

(*Select one*)

- a) Student, currently seeking creative employment
- b) Student, not currently seeking employment
- c) Not a student, currently seeking creative employment
- d) Not a student, employed outside of creative fields
- e) Not seeking employment at this time

10. How long have you been seeking employment or projects in the creative field?

(*Select one*)

- a) I am not currently seeking opportunities
- b) Less than 1 month
- c) 1 – 3 months
- d) 3 – 6 months
- e) 6 – 12 months
- f) More than 1 year

11. Do you currently receive any income from creative work or related activities? (*Select one*)

- a) No, I do not receive any income from creative work
- b) Yes, but less than €200 per month
- c) Yes, between €200 and €500 per month

- d) Yes, more than €500 per month
- e) Prefer not to say

12. What is your main source of income currently? (Select one)

- a) Family or partner support
- b) Non-creative job(s)
- c) Social support (e.g., unemployment benefits, welfare, disability benefits)
- d) Scholarships or educational grants
- e) Creative work or related activities
- f) Informal or casual work (without formal contract)
- g) Remittances from relatives abroad
- h) Prefer not to say

13. What do you consider to be the biggest obstacle(s) to starting or developing your creative career? (Multiple answers allowed)

- a) Lack of technical skills or proficiency in industry tools
- b) Don't know where to start / lack of clear guidance
- c) Industry is too competitive
- d) Lack of soft skills (e.g. communication, teamwork, time management)
- e) Limited access to mentorship or professional networks
- f) Lack of financial resources to invest in training, tools, or equipment
- g) Mental stress, burnout, or lack of emotional support
- h) Limited access to affordable or quality educational/training opportunities
- i) Language barriers (primarily little or no knowledge of English as the globally recognized language of communication) limiting access to opportunities or effective communication
- j) Low self-confidence or fear of failure
- k) Poor access to reliable information or up-to-date resources
- l) Corruption or unethical practices in the industry or institutions
- m) Exploitation or unfair treatment (e.g. unpaid work, unclear contracts)
- n) Lack of personal support or encouragement from friends, family, or community
- o) Discrimination or bias based on gender, ethnicity, appearance, or background
- p) Lack of awareness of available programs, calls, or funding opportunities
- q) Difficulty navigating legal or bureaucratic requirements (e.g. business registration, freelance tax status)
- r) Lack of safe or inclusive workspaces (e.g. gender-safe, LGBTQ+-friendly)
- s) Inadequate national policies or public support for creative professions
- t) Limited access to stable internet, tools, or digital platforms for promotion
- u) Difficulty building a personal brand or gaining visibility
- v) Limited opportunities for collaboration or co-creation
- w) Cultural norms or family expectations that discourage creative careers

14. What kind of support have you received or do you expect to receive for your creative work, and who were (or would be) the main sources? (Select all that apply; multiple choices allowed)

- a) I have received or expect to receive financial support (grants, sponsorships, crowdfunding) from public institutions (e.g., ministry, municipality, cultural office)
- b) I have received or expect to receive financial support from private foundations, donors, or individual sponsors

- c) I have received or expect to receive mentorship or professional guidance from independent mentors, creative professionals, or professional associations/unions
- d) I have received or expect to receive training or educational programs (courses, workshops, boot camps) organized by universities, educational institutions, incubators, or accelerators
- e) I have received or expect to receive access to materials or equipment (tools, studio space, software) from NGOs, civil society organizations, or private companies
- f) I have received or expect to receive networking opportunities (events, communities, professional groups) from peer or community creative networks, collectives, or online platforms (e.g., Patreon, Behance, Etsy)
- g) I have received or expect to receive collaboration opportunities (projects with other creatives) through professional associations, unions, or community networks
- h) I have received or expect to receive marketing or promotion support from private companies, corporate sponsors, or online platforms
- i) I have received or expect to receive technical assistance (IT support, platform setup) from NGOs, incubators, or private companies
- j) I have received or expect to receive legal or administrative support (contracts, copyright, business setup) from public institutions or professional associations
- k) I have received or expect to receive emotional or psychological support (peer groups, counselling) from friends, family, or personal networks
- l) I have received or expect to receive volunteer support or help from friends, family, or personal networks
- m) I have done everything independently, without any support
- n) I have not yet had the opportunity to seek or receive support

15. For which of the following purposes have you used or do you intend to use your creative work as a tool? (Multiple answers allowed)

- a) To express personal or cultural identity
- b) To promote cultural diversity and intercultural understanding
- c) To raise awareness about social or environmental issues
- d) To advocate for human rights or social justice
- e) To support mental health and emotional wellbeing (e.g., coping with stress)
- f) To engage and mobilize communities
- g) To educate or inform others
- h) To preserve cultural heritage or traditions
- i) To create opportunities for collaboration across cultures
- j) To challenge stereotypes or discrimination
- k) To generate income or professional opportunities
- l) To build networks or professional connections
- m) To influence public opinion or policy change
- n) To inspire or mentor others
- o) To foster innovation or experimentation
- p) To document or archive community stories and experiences
- q) To participate in cultural or artistic events and festivals
- r) To increase visibility or recognition in your field
- s) To strengthen community resilience or solidarity
- t) To celebrate milestones, events, or identity
- u) To explore or experiment with new creative techniques or media

16. Are you currently considering transitioning into or exploring a different role within or outside the creative sector? (Select one)

- a) Yes, a completely different creative role
- b) Yes, a somewhat similar creative role
- c) Yes, a role outside the creative field
- d) I am not sure
- e) No, I want to build my career in my current creative interest

17. What are your most important sources of inspiration for your creative work? (Multiple answers allowed)

- a) Personal experiences, emotions, and values
- b) Cultural background, heritage, and traditions
- c) Social or environmental challenges I care about
- d) Other artists, creative works, or role models (online or offline)
- e) Digital tools, platforms, and emerging technologies
- f) Collaboration, teamwork, and idea exchange
- g) Feedback and reactions from audiences or peers
- h) Experiences from traveling or working in diverse environments
- i) Trends and topics I follow through media or education

18. What motivates you to explore or build a creative career, and where would you ideally like to be in 5 years? (Select the option that best describes your motivation and desired direction)

- a) I want to grow personally and creatively, and I see myself still learning, experimenting, and exploring
- b) I hope to turn my passion into a stable job or long-term collaboration in the creative field
- c) I am motivated by professional success and recognition, and I aim to work independently as an artist or creative entrepreneur
- d) I see creative work as a way to give back to my community, possibly by mentoring others in the future
- e) I'd like to combine creative work with another profession, while continuing to improve my skills
- f) I'm curious about creative opportunities, but I'm still not sure where I want this path to take me
- g) I see creativity as a chance to connect internationally and gain new experiences across cultures
- h) I am motivated by the potential for financial independence and a better income through creative work

Section 5 - Professional Development, Soft Skills & Learning Preferences (All Participants)

19. Have you ever paid for courses, trainings, or boot camps relevant to your field? (Please select the range that best represents the total amount you have spent on such professional development)

- a) No, I have never paid for any courses or trainings
- b) €0 - €50 (small investments, e.g., single webinars or short workshops)
- c) €51 - €150 (moderate investments, e.g., multi-session courses or specialized trainings)

- d) €151 - €300 (significant investments, e.g., boot camps or professional certifications)
- e) €301 - €500 (larger investments, e.g., advanced or long-term programs)
- f) More than €500 (major investments in professional development)
- g) Prefer not to say

20. Are you interested in participating in a program focused on developing soft skills and intercultural communication? (Select one)

- a) Yes, definitely
- b) Maybe, depending on conditions and duration
- c) No, not interested
- d) Not sure

21. If you answered "Yes" or "Maybe" to Question 20, please leave your email so we can contact you with more information about the program. (Short answer)

22. How would you rate your knowledge and ability to work in international or multicultural teams? (Select one)

- a) Very good – extensive experience
- b) Good – solid experience
- c) Average – some experience but want to improve
- d) Poor – little or no experience or knowledge
- e) Not sure

23. Which soft and digital competences would you like to further develop to strengthen your role in the creative industries and intercultural collaboration? (Please select all that apply)

- a) Effective communication – expressing ideas clearly in person and online, adapting style to different audiences
- b) Intercultural understanding and empathy – appreciating cultural differences and building inclusive relationships
- c) Teamwork and digital collaboration – working effectively in diverse teams using collaborative digital tools
- d) Confidence, public speaking, and digital storytelling – presenting ideas and creative work persuasively
- e) Creative thinking and innovation – generating original ideas, experimenting, and taking creative risks
- f) Critical thinking and problem-solving – analyzing situations, questioning assumptions, finding digital and non-digital solutions
- g) Digital content creation – producing and editing visual, audio, text, or multimedia content using digital tools
- h) Digital information literacy – searching, evaluating, and managing data and content effectively and responsibly
- i) Digital safety and well-being – protecting personal data, mental health, and ensuring environmentally responsible tech use
- j) Digital identity and online presence – managing your professional image, portfolios, and visibility in creative fields
- k) Programming and creative coding – using code to build interactive, generative, or artistic digital projects

- l) Netiquette and responsible communication – behaving respectfully and ethically in digital environments
- m) Adaptability and flexibility – adjusting to changing tools, workflows, and intercultural environments
- n) Time and task management – organizing creative processes, meeting deadlines, and working independently
- o) Self-regulation and emotional intelligence – managing stress, motivation, and feedback in professional settings
- p) Learning to learn and personal development – setting goals, reflecting on learning, and identifying skill gaps
- q) Entrepreneurship and initiative – taking ownership of projects, building networks, and turning ideas into action
- r) Engaging in digital citizenship – using digital tools to participate in society, advocate, and raise awareness for causes
- s) Mathematical and scientific thinking applied to creativity – using logic, numbers, or tech in creative projects (e.g., music algorithms, generative art)

24. Which learning methods do you consider most effective for developing soft skills and intercultural competencies? (Select all that apply)

- a) In-person workshops (face-to-face)
- b) Online courses and webinars
- c) Mentoring programs and individual coaching
- d) Gamification and interactive learning games
- e) Group projects and teamwork
- f) Self-study using available resources (videos, articles, podcasts)
- g) Practice through volunteering or project work

25. How much time are you willing to invest in additional skill development? (Select one)

- a) Not willing
- b) Limited (up to 5 hours per week)
- c) Moderate (5–10 hours per week)
- d) High (more than 10 hours per week)

Section 6 - Privacy Policy

In accordance with **[insert the full name and article reference of the relevant data protection law in your country]**, we are committed to ensuring that all data collected through this survey is used exclusively for research purposes within the DigiCreate project.

Participation is voluntary, and all responses will be processed in a manner that guarantees full confidentiality and anonymity. Collected data will not be shared with third parties or used for any purposes beyond those explicitly stated here.

By continuing, you confirm that you:

- have been informed about how your data will be used and protected, and
- give your informed consent for its use in accordance with the applicable data protection legislation.

If you have any questions regarding data processing, or if you'd like to stay informed about upcoming conferences, networking events, or workshops designed for young creatives like you, please contact us at: **[insert email address of the partner conducting this survey]**.

I hereby confirm that I have read and agree to the Privacy Policy

The confirmation message displayed after the respondent clicks “Submit” in the survey:

Thank you very much for completing our online survey!

Want to stay connected and get the latest updates, behind-the-scenes content, and exclusive opportunities?

Follow us on social media and join the DigiCreate community:

- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/digicreate.empower>
- Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/digicreate.empower/>
- LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/digicreate-empower>

The DigiCreate Team

<https://digicreate-empower.eu/>

6.1.3 Online focus group

Online focus groups represent a key qualitative research method within the DigiCreate project. This method complements the desk research and online questionnaire by providing deeper, context-specific insights into the lived experiences, perceptions, and challenges faced by young people involved in the cultural and creative industries (CCI) across six participating countries—Germany, Portugal, Spain, Montenegro, Serbia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Each partner organization will organize one virtual focus group with 15 young creatives (aged 18–30), representing diverse creative sub-sectors, levels of experience, gender identities, and regional backgrounds (urban/rural). The sessions will be conducted via Zoom, Microsoft Teams, or a similar online platform and will last up to 2 hours, allowing participants to express their views in an open, interactive format.

The main objectives of the focus groups are to:

1. Identify the main skill gaps and training needs of young creatives, including factors related to employment history, income stability, and the role of creativity in their well-being.
2. Explore individual and systemic barriers hindering professional development, such as limited access to markets, discrimination, and lack of strategic guidance.
3. Understand what types of support, resources, and opportunities youth currently access or seek to build soft skills, intercultural competencies, and create social impact.
4. Examine preferences and challenges regarding non-formal education and learning methods, and how these approaches contribute to skill development.

Focus groups will follow a **semi-structured discussion guide** developed jointly by the research team, featuring open-ended questions that expand upon the themes identified in the online questionnaire. This approach ensures consistency across countries while allowing in-depth exploration and spontaneous input, following the provided full set of discussion questions aligned with the four key topics.

Not all partner countries will use every question in their focus groups. Instead, questions will be selected based on the participant profiles—basic background information will be gathered upon receiving their consent to participate. Before the start of the discussion, all participants are required to sign the **Consent to Participate in Focus Group** form (template provided in this document), which includes key information on voluntary participation, recording and note-taking, anonymity and data protection, use of quotes in awareness-raising campaigns, and data processing.

Discussions will be moderated by trained facilitators from each partner country. Sessions will be recorded with participants' consent, transcribed, and analyzed by the national research teams. Transcripts and all notes will be anonymized and securely stored. All data will be used strictly for research purposes, training design, and advocacy within the DigiCreate project.

The focus groups will generate qualitative data that will:

- Validate and enrich survey findings;
- Highlight national and regional barriers to professional growth;
- Offer insights into youth learning preferences and support mechanisms;
- Inform capacity-building actions and policy recommendations targeting CCI inclusion and youth empowerment.

6.1.3.1 Focus Group Framework And Question Guide

The aim of this focus group framework and question guide is to equip facilitators with a unified, structured, yet adaptable format for leading in-depth discussions with young creatives within an approximate 120-minute timeframe. Facilitators are responsible for steering the conversation, maintaining focus, and ensuring that all four main sections are addressed in accordance with the provided guidelines.

Optional questions are designed to support flexibility and should be selected based on the group's energy, available time, and participant backgrounds. Facilitators are encouraged to use follow-up prompts to deepen understanding and foster active, purposeful engagement throughout the session.

Session Duration: 120 minutes

Format: Online via Zoom, Microsoft Teams or similar platform

Target Group: 15 young creatives (aged 18–30) per partner country – national focus groups

Facilitator Role: Guide the flow, ensure all sections are covered, and remind participants to be concise and raise hands before speaking.

Pre-session Prep: Review participant profiles ahead of time

Opening Remarks by the Facilitator (5 minutes)

At the start of the session, the facilitator will welcome the participants and introduce themselves. They will explain the purpose of the focus group: to gather insights from youth workers and creative sector professionals about their experiences, challenges, and needs. These insights will inform the development of targeted support and training opportunities.

The facilitator will then clearly present the ground rules to ensure the discussion remains respectful, inclusive, and productive. These ground rules include:

- Participants should speak one at a time and raise their hand (virtually) before contributing.
- There are no right or wrong answers; honest and candid perspectives are valued.
- Participants are encouraged to express differing opinions respectfully to foster diverse viewpoints.
- The session will be recorded solely for analysis purposes; all responses will remain anonymous in any reports.
- Confidentiality is emphasized: participants are asked not to share information disclosed by others outside the group.
- Participants may take breaks as needed by stepping away briefly.

By establishing these guidelines at the outset, the facilitator ensures a structured and respectful environment conducive to open dialogue.

SECTION 1: Identification of the main skill gaps and training needs of young creatives, factors related to employment history, income salary and role of creativity in their well-being (approximately 30 minutes)

Facilitator Intro Prompt

At the beginning, the facilitator invites participants to briefly introduce themselves and share basic information about their background, education, and experience in the creative sector.

Q1. Mandatory – Introduction Round (max 1 minute per person)

Questions:

- What is your name and which city are you from?
- What is your current role or aspiration in the creative sector?
- What is your educational or training background?
- If employed, are you satisfied with your current salary relative to your experience?

Facilitator Note:

Gently remind participants if they omit part of the introduction. This step builds context and encourages trust.

Q2. Mandatory – Digital Tools and Technical Skills



Question:

- Which digital or technical skills are essential in your creative field?

Facilitator Note:

Select around 5–6 participants from different creative subfields, or compare responses by employment or education status if the group is more homogeneous.

Q3. Optional – Ideal Role and Fulfillment

Questions:

- What would be your ideal role in your desired field?
- Why do you find it fulfilling?

Suggested Use:

Use if most participants are job-seeking or if some mentioned particularly aspirational paths in the introduction.

Q4. Optional – Relevance of Additional Training

Questions:

- What kind of training have you pursued (e.g., courses, bootcamps)?
- Which were the most useful and why?
- Which were less useful, and what was missing?

Facilitator Note:

If a good practice is mentioned, ask follow-up questions to explore motivation and impact.

Q5. Optional – Fulfillment in the Role

Question:

- What brings you a sense of fulfillment in your (desired) role?

Suggested Use:

Use with participants who express strong motivation or self-awareness.

Q6. Optional – Access to Free Learning Resources

Questions:

- Have free learning resources been sufficient to reach your current level?
- What stage of your career are you currently in?

Facilitator Note:

Balance participation by selecting voices from different career levels or backgrounds.

Q7. Optional – Transitions Within the Creative Sector

Question:

- If you changed roles within the creative sector, what skills were transferable?

Suggested Use:

Use if several people mentioned switching paths or one person has relevant experience.

Q8. Optional – Most Valuable Skills in the Sector

Questions:

- Which skills are universally important in the creative sector?
- What about in your specific field?

Suggested Use:

A flexible question suitable for open discussion at the end of this section.

SECTION 2: Exploration of individual and systemic barriers hindering professional development, such as limited access to markets, discrimination or lack of strategic guidance (approximately 30 minutes)

Facilitator Intro Prompt

The facilitator invites participants to reflect on what an ideal job looks like to them and to identify potential challenges that may hinder achieving it.

Q1. Mandatory – Personal Obstacles

Questions:

- What has been your biggest challenge in professional development?
- Was it expected, or did it take you by surprise?

Facilitator Note:

Encourage a range of responses based on different backgrounds and career stages.

Q2. Mandatory – Core Obstacles

Questions:

- What do you see as the biggest obstacle in your professional field?
- From your perspective, what do you believe is the root cause of this obstacle?

Facilitator Note:

Refer back to participants who provided insightful reflections earlier. Encourage personal interpretations and note any patterns.

Q3. Optional – Local Market Limitations

Question:

- Do you think the popularity or recognition of your field in your city or region limits your reach or success?

Suggested Use:

Ideal for participants working in less visible or emerging creative careers affected by local demand.

Q4. Optional – Public Perception and Misconceptions

Questions:

- Do you believe your profession is misunderstood by the general public?
- How does this affect your motivation or opportunities?

Recommended For:

Groups with participants in niche or unconventional creative roles.

Q5. Optional – Market Expansion Efforts

Questions:

- Have you or your company/organization tried to expand into other markets?
- Which platforms or methods did you use?
- What difficulties did you face or expect?

Facilitator Note:

If no one volunteers, prompt individuals already working in scalable fields (e.g., digital art, design, media).

Q6. Optional – Reasons for Limited Market Expansion

Question:

- If you haven't expanded to new markets, what stopped you?

Suggested Use:

Follow-up for Q5 or as a standalone for participants with untapped potential.

Q7. Optional – Navigating Career Paths

Questions:

- Was your career development intuitive, or did you have to figure it out on your own?
- Have institutions or employers supported you meaningfully?

Recommended For:

Students, freelancers, or those early in their careers.

Q8. Optional – Financial Viability

Questions:



- Do you believe it is possible to make a financially stable living in your creative field?
- If yes, what worked for you? If not, what would need to change?

Suggested Use:

Use if income concerns were raised earlier.

Q9. Optional – Unfair Barriers

Question:

- Have you ever felt your career progress was limited by something beyond your control?

Facilitator Note:

If no one responds, introduce a general question on how new technologies (e.g., AI) may have affected their industry.

SECTION 3: Understanding what types of support, resources, and opportunities are currently accessible for building soft skills and intercultural competences and how youth perceives them (approximately 20 minutes)

Facilitator Intro Prompt

The facilitator invites participants to define what soft skills and intercultural competences mean to them and to discuss their relevance and application within their creative professions.

Q1. Mandatory – Understanding Soft Skills

Questions:

- What comes to mind when you hear the term “soft skills”?
- Which soft skills are the most relevant for your creative work?

Facilitator Note:

Encourage unique contributions and avoid repetition.

Q2. Mandatory – Intercultural Competence

Questions:

- What does “intercultural competence” mean to you?
- Is this important in your work? How?

Facilitator Note:

Clarify the term if needed (e.g., working with diverse clients, teams, audiences).

Q3 & Q4. Optional – Experiences with Skill Development

Questions:

- Have you taken part in any trainings or programs to build soft or intercultural skills? What format was it (e.g., workshop, online course)?

- Was it effective?
- If yes: How did it help you?
- If no: What would have made it more useful?

Facilitator Note:

Pair these two questions. Follow up on both structure and impact.

Q5. Optional – Preferred Learning Formats

Question:

- What type of setting or format would best support your development of soft and intercultural skills?

Suggested Use:

Good follow-up for those with mixed or critical experiences of past trainings.

Q6. Optional – Agents of Social Change

Questions:

- Do you see yourself as someone who can promote positive social change through your work?
- What support would help you grow in this direction?

Suggested Use:

Engaging for those with strong values or interest in community impact.

SECTION 4: Exploring preferences and challenges regarding non-formal education and learning methods, and how these approaches contribute to skill development (approximately 30 minutes)

Facilitator Intro Prompt

The facilitator encourages participants to share their experiences with non-formal learning opportunities in their field and to envision an ideal learning environment tailored to creatives.

Q1. Mandatory – Non-Formal Learning Experience

Questions:

- What kinds of non-formal learning (e.g., workshops, peer sessions) have you participated in?
- What were the topics?
- Which aspects did you find most helpful?

Facilitator Note:

Follow up on especially insightful or innovative examples.

Q2. Mandatory – Designing the Ideal Learning Space

Prompt:

Imagine a learning space created specifically for creatives like you.

- What would it look like?
- What would be taught, and who would teach it?

Facilitator Note:

Allow a few minutes for reflection. Help participants envision realistic but creative models.

Q3. Optional – Access to Opportunities

Questions:

- Are there enough non-formal education opportunities in your field?
- Where have you seen them, or how have you searched?

Suggested Use:

Ask those with less formal educational experience.

Q4. Optional – Barriers to Participation

Question:

- Have you ever wanted to join a non-formal training but decided not to? What stopped you?

Facilitator Note:

Useful for understanding real-life access barriers.

Q5. Optional – Perceived Impact of Non-Formal Learning

Questions:

- Do you think non-formal learning makes a real difference in your profession?
- How and to what extent?

Facilitator Note:

Encourage participants to provide specific examples of how non-formal learning has influenced their skills or career growth.

Q6. Optional – Peer Learning and Influence

Questions:

- Do you believe that learning from peers plays a key role in your growth?
- Can anyone share how a peer or mentor influenced their path?

Facilitator Note:

Invite participants to share personal stories about peer influence; use follow-up prompts if no one volunteers.

Facilitator Closing Statement (5 minutes)

The facilitator thanks participants for their time and for openly sharing their experiences and perspectives. They explain that the discussion is part of a broader research effort focused on identifying the challenges and development needs of young professionals in the creative sector across Europe. Participant insights will contribute to shaping future programs and support initiatives.

If time allows, the facilitator invites any final comments or reflections from the group. They then inform participants about potential follow-up activities or opportunities to remain engaged in the process.

6.1.3.2 Consent to Participate in Focus Group – Form Template

To ensure the protection of all partners involved and to facilitate the collection of qualitative data on the needs, challenges, and experiences of young people in the cultural and creative industries, all participants are required to sign a Consent to Participate in Focus Group form before the start of the session. This form, adapted in accordance with national legislation, outlines the terms and purpose of participation in the DigiCreate focus group, including essential information on voluntary participation, recording and note-taking, anonymity and data protection, use of quotes in awareness-raising campaigns, and data processing.

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN FOCUS GROUP

I, *(insert full name of participant)*, hereby voluntarily give my consent to participate in a focus group organized within the framework of the Erasmus+ project *DigiCreate*, implemented by *(insert name and location of your organization/institution)* in cooperation with partner organizations from *(list the remaining 5 partner countries)*, with the financial support of the European Union. The focus group will take place on *(insert day, date, and time)*, online, via the *(insert platform name)* platform.

I understand that the purpose of this focus group is to explore the needs, challenges, and experiences of young people in the cultural and creative industries, as part of the *DigiCreate* research process, and I confirm that I have received the agenda of the event.

I give my consent under the following conditions:

- **Voluntary participation:** I understand that my participation in this focus group is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without any negative consequences.
- **Recording and note-taking:** I agree that the session may be recorded and that notes may be taken for research and analytical purposes.
- **Anonymity and data protection:** My identity will not be revealed, and my personal data will not be used in any reports, analyses, or publications. Selected quotes may be

used in analytical materials, but without mentioning my name or any identifying information.

- **Use of statements in awareness-raising campaigns:** I understand and accept that certain anonymized quotes may be used for the purposes of a public awareness-raising campaign related to the research topic, with full respect for my anonymity.
- **Data processing:** The organizer commits to processing my data in accordance with (*insert the name of the relevant data protection law in your country*) and will not use the data for any purpose not mentioned in this consent form.
- **Confidentiality of group discussion:** I agree to respect the confidentiality of the focus group setting and not to disclose or share any personal stories, opinions, or experiences expressed by other participants outside of this session, in order to ensure a safe and respectful space for open discussion.

Date: _____

Full Name of Participant: _____

Name of Organization/Institution (if applicable): _____

Signature: _____

6.1.4 Feasibility Study

The Feasibility Study is a systematic evaluation and analysis of the potential of the proposed mentoring model within the DigiCreate project. It is a key qualitative research instrument designed to assess the practical viability of the mentoring model across the six partner countries. This study complements desk research, surveys, and focus groups by focusing on operational, legal, financial, and stakeholder-related dimensions that influence the successful implementation of the mentoring framework. It serves as a crucial decision-making tool that determines whether the project should proceed and how to ensure its material and operational success. Unlike desk research, surveys, and focus groups that primarily collect data on needs, attitudes, and existing conditions, the feasibility study focuses on assessing the practical viability and sustainability of the mentoring framework in each partner country.

The study acts like a “measuring instrument” for the investment represented by the mentoring model, identifying the problem, measuring its characteristics, generating alternatives, comparing them, and recommending the best solution supported by measurable indicators. It provides documented evidence on the feasibility and expected success of the initiative, enabling continuous monitoring and analysis of results during implementation.

Before the design of the training program and mentoring methodology, each partner organization will conduct a national feasibility study following the provided guidelines. This includes:

- **Technical and Technological Feasibility:**
Assessing whether the required technologies and digital platforms exist and can be effectively used within budget and time constraints. This involves exploring alternative technical solutions to deliver the mentoring program in each national context, ensuring that the chosen approach is realistic and efficient.
- **Economic Feasibility:**
Analyzing cost estimates related to mentoring activities (trainers, materials, logistics,

digital infrastructure) to ensure that the investment aligns with available resources and offers benefits proportional to its costs. This includes preliminary cost-benefit considerations and identifying potential funding gaps or resource-sharing opportunities.

- **Organizational Feasibility:**
Evaluating whether partner organizations have the necessary human resources, experience, and institutional structure to implement the mentoring program effectively. This also includes assessing capacities for coordination, mentoring delivery, and administrative support.
- **Legal and Regulatory Feasibility:**
Reviewing relevant national legislation, such as data protection laws, employment regulations, certifications, and permissions required for mentoring activities. This ensures compliance with legal standards and identifies any administrative barriers.
- **Time Feasibility:**
Considering whether the proposed schedule and deadlines for project implementation are achievable within the national context and whether the mentoring activities can be realistically delivered in the planned timeframe.
- **Stakeholder Engagement and Risk Assessment:**
Consulting 3–5 key national stakeholders per country (public institutions, cultural centers, creative hubs) to evaluate support readiness and collaboration potential. Identifying risks such as low participation, technological barriers, or cultural challenges, and proposing mitigation strategies.
- **Development of Practical Recommendations:**
Based on the collected data and analysis, partners will formulate actionable recommendations regarding the mentoring model’s design — including mentoring structure (individual/group), mentoring types (peer/expert-led), session frequency, mentor recruitment and training, and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

The outcome of the feasibility study will be a concise, well-structured report containing all these analyses and practical recommendations for the mentoring framework’s design, including mentoring formats, session frequency, recruitment and training of mentors, and monitoring mechanisms.

This study bridges the gap between decision-makers and technical experts, ensuring that the mentoring model is tailored to each country’s specific needs and capacities. The final feasibility report serves as a critical resource for informed decision-making on whether and how to proceed with the project.

6.1.4.1 Feasibility Study Guidelines

These guidelines are intended to support partners in preparing the Feasibility Study — a key document that will complement the publication of research findings from the DigiCreate project. The research publication includes a desk review, an online survey, and focus group discussions, all of which provide critical information on existing solutions, target group needs, and contextual justification for this feasibility study.

The Feasibility Study will assess whether the proposed **methodological framework** and **mentoring model**—designed as a blend of structured workshops, virtual debates, and

interactive role-playing simulations—can be successfully implemented across national contexts. This methodology combines learning and gamification to ensure an engaging and practical experience for participants.

The overall project spans **36 months** with a total budget of **€533,908.60**.

6.1.4.1.1 Technical and Technological Feasibility

Goal: Assess whether the required technologies and digital platforms exist and can be effectively used within the given budget and timeframe.

- Are digital tools and platforms (e.g., Zoom, Miro, Moodle, or similar) available and suitable for delivering gamified and interactive sessions?
- Are there alternative technical solutions in case of connectivity problems?
- Is there sufficient digital infrastructure and internet access for trainers and participants?
- Can the selected tools support breakout rooms, live polls, shared documents, and other interactive features?
- Are there local IT experts available for technical support during implementation?
- What are the estimated costs for licenses, software, hardware, or subscriptions?

6.1.4.1.2 Economic Feasibility

Goal: Evaluate whether project funds are sufficient and efficiently allocated to cover the costs of implementing the mentoring methodology.

- What are the projected costs for trainers/facilitators, digital tools, educational materials, session coordination, and monitoring?
- Are these costs covered within the project's allocated budget lines?
- Are there opportunities for co-financing, in-kind support, or cost-sharing among partners?
- Does the expected impact (skills gained, engagement levels, employability increase) justify the investment?
- Are there potential financial risks (e.g., cost overruns, inflation) and how can they be mitigated?

6.1.4.1.3 Organizational Feasibility

Goal: Determine whether partner organizations have sufficient capacity to deliver the methodology effectively.

- Do partners have experience in non-formal education, digital facilitation, and mentoring?
- Are there qualified staff or trainers available to implement 5-day sessions using the proposed structure (workshops, debates, role-plays)?
- Is the organizational infrastructure equipped for planning, coordination, participant recruitment, and quality assurance?
- Are there internal processes in place for reporting, evaluation, and follow-up?

- Can the organization ensure smooth communication between mentors, participants, and stakeholders?

6.1.4.1.4 Legal and Regulatory Feasibility

Goal: Ensure compliance with legal frameworks relevant to digital training and mentoring.

- Are there national laws affecting data protection (e.g., GDPR), online participation, or youth engagement?
- Are there legal limitations on using specific digital platforms or storing user data?
- Are any permits, certifications, or official approvals required for conducting virtual mentoring or non-formal education activities?
- Is the methodology in line with labor or volunteer laws applicable to mentors and trainers?

6.1.4.1.5 Time Feasibility

Goal: Assess whether the proposed activities can be completed within the project timeline and national context.

- Can the full 5-day virtual program (6 hours/day) be implemented as planned?
- Are there enough time and resources to recruit participants, train mentors, and conduct preparation before delivery?
- Are national or local calendars (e.g., holidays, exams) compatible with the proposed schedule?
- Is there time allocated for evaluation, adaptation, and reporting?

6.1.4.1.6 Stakeholder Engagement and Risk Assessment

Goal: Evaluate the involvement of key national stakeholders and identify risks to implementation.

- Have 3–5 key stakeholders (e.g., cultural institutions, education providers, creative hubs) been consulted?
- What is their willingness to collaborate, provide space, co-funding, or other forms of support?
- What are potential risks (e.g., low digital literacy, limited participant availability, lack of motivation)?
- How will these risks be mitigated (e.g., pre-training, incentives, flexible scheduling)?
- Is there a mechanism for stakeholder feedback and sustained engagement?

6.1.4.1.7 Methodology Feasibility (Non-Formal Education)

Goal: Assess whether the methodology—based on learning through experience and interaction—can be applied effectively.

- Are structured workshops, virtual debates, and role-playing simulations relevant and engaging for the target group?
- Can trainers adapt the content and delivery style to diverse learning needs and digital skills?
- Are there existing good practices or pilots in each country that support this approach?
- Are the topics and methods aligned with participants' professional or educational goals?
- Are the materials (guides, handouts, evaluation forms) available or feasible to develop?
- Is there a monitoring system to measure engagement, learning outcomes, and satisfaction?

6.1.4.1.8 Development of Practical Recommendations

Each partner organization should conclude its national feasibility report with practical and context-specific recommendations, including:

- Adjustments to the mentoring and training model (e.g., length, structure, tools).
- Preferences for group vs. individual mentoring and peer-led vs. expert-led models.
- Best platforms and technologies for national implementation.
- Mentor recruitment strategies and proposed training topics.
- Strategies for participant engagement and retention.
- Identified risks and mitigation actions.
- Suggestions for monitoring and evaluation tools.

6.2 Data Collection Procedure

The data collection within the DigiCreate project should be structured through four interconnected research components: **desk research**, **online survey**, **focus groups**, and the **feasibility study**. Each component should follow a clearly defined guidelines to ensure relevance, consistency, and practical applicability across participating countries.

6.2.1 Desk Research

Each partner should conduct national-level desk research to identify existing mentoring practices, policies, digital education tools, and non-formal education models relevant to the cultural and creative industries (CCI), following the guidelines provided in section 6.1.1.1 Desk Research Structure of this document. Sources should include academic publications, public reports, institutional strategies, and NGO practices. The goal is to establish a baseline of current approaches and identify potential gaps and opportunities for adaptation within the DigiCreate context.

6.2.2 Online Survey

Online questionnaires should be distributed via digital platforms to the defined target group. Respondents should be invited to complete the survey anonymously over a 21-day period. The questionnaire should be designed to collect both quantitative and qualitative data on mentees' needs, digital competencies, learning expectations, and perceived challenges within the creative industries, following the guidelines provided in section 6.1.2.1 Online Questionnaire Structure.

6.2.3 Focus Groups

Each partner organization should conduct one online focus group session involving approximately 15 young people (aged 18–30) who are active in the CCI sector. Participants should be selected to reflect diversity in creative sub-sectors, experience levels, gender identities, and geographic backgrounds (urban/rural). Sessions should last up to two hours and be conducted via platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, or similar.

Participants should not be provided with the discussion questions in advance to ensure authenticity of responses. Focus groups should be moderated by trained facilitators using a semi-structured discussion guide jointly developed by the research team. The questions should be:

- Short and clearly formulated
- Focused on one key theme or dimension each
- Unambiguous and easy to understand
- Open-ended or structured as sentence completions
- Non-threatening and not overly personal
- Designed to avoid simple “yes” or “no” responses

The purpose of the focus groups is to complement survey results by gaining deeper insights into participants' attitudes, experiences, and motivations related to non-formal education, mentoring, and digital learning in the creative sector, following the guidelines provided in section 6.1.3.1 Online Focus Group Questionnaire.

6.2.4 Feasibility Study

Following the initial data collection phases, each partner should conduct a national feasibility study to assess the practical viability of implementing the proposed DigiCreate mentoring model. Data collection for the feasibility study should include both qualitative and analytical techniques such as stakeholder consultations, internal capacity assessments, and legal and contextual analysis.

The study should address the following dimensions:

- Technical and technological feasibility
- Economic and financial feasibility
- Organizational capacity and operational feasibility
- Legal and regulatory compatibility
- Timeframe and scheduling feasibility
- Stakeholder engagement and risk assessment
- Feasibility of the proposed non-formal education methodology

All national feasibility studies should be developed according to unified guidelines provided within the DigiCreate framework. This ensures comparability across countries and enables a consolidated evaluation, leading to a joint implementation strategy for the DigiCreate mentoring model, following guidelines provided in section 6.1.4.1 Feasibility Study Guidelines.

7 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

7.1 Reliability

Reliability refers to the consistency and dependability of the data collection instruments and procedures used in the research. In the DigiCreate project, reliability was carefully addressed across all research components—desk research, online surveys, focus groups, and feasibility studies—to ensure that the findings are stable, repeatable, and trustworthy.

For the online questionnaires, reliability was enhanced by employing standardized digital survey tools that facilitated uniform question presentation and response recording across all six participating countries. The questionnaires were administered under controlled conditions, with designated researchers responsible for overseeing distribution, clarifying participant queries, and managing data collection. This centralized management minimized variations in data collection methods, reducing potential measurement errors and data collector bias, as well as enabling easier comparative analysis among the six partner countries.

In addition, trained facilitators conducted the online focus groups using a semi-structured discussion guide developed and provided within this document. This guide offered a consistent framework and standardized questions for moderation while allowing flexibility for participants to express nuanced views. Sessions were recorded, transcribed, and systematically coded, which further contributed to consistent data interpretation and analysis.

Desk research relied on credible and authoritative sources, such as academic publications, policy documents, and sector reports. To maintain reliability, partner organizations followed a harmonized protocol for data extraction, verification, and synthesis, ensuring that secondary data incorporated into the research results were accurate and relevant.

The feasibility study incorporated structured assessment criteria and checklists covering technical, economic, organizational, legal, time, and stakeholder engagement dimensions. Consistent application of these criteria by all partners allowed for comparable and replicable evaluations of mentoring program viability within different national contexts.

Overall, these measures collectively strengthened the reliability of the research outputs by ensuring that data collection and analysis methods were consistent, transparent, and replicable, thus supporting credible evidence-based conclusions within the DigiCreate project framework.

7.2 Validity

Validity refers to the extent to which a research instrument accurately measures the concepts it intends to measure. In the DigiCreate project, content validity was prioritized by designing the online questionnaires, focus group discussion guides, and feasibility study frameworks based on thorough desk research and preliminary data analysis. These instruments included questions specifically targeting key dimensions such as skill gaps, training needs, barriers in the cultural and creative industries (CCI), and preferences regarding non-formal education and digital learning. This approach ensured that the collected data accurately reflected the real challenges and opportunities faced by young creatives across the six partner countries.

Furthermore, consistent administration across all methods—desk research, online surveys, focus groups, and feasibility studies—was maintained through clear instructions, simple and precise language, and standardized online or virtual formats. This contributed to the overall validity and reliability of the research findings.

8 DATA ANALYSIS

After data collection, all results were systematically organized and analyzed at the national level by the partner organizations in each country.

Desk research was used as a key instrument for collecting secondary data. Each partner organization conducted a structured analysis of relevant sources, including academic papers, official reports, statistical data, and policy documents related to youth in the Cultural and Creative Industries (CCI) sector. To maintain reliability and consistency, all partners used unified guidelines and templates, and submitted their desk research summaries in English.

Online questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Frequency tables were created, and results were visually presented through pie charts and bar graphs to clearly illustrate key trends and distributions. Open-ended responses were processed through a combination of quantitative and qualitative content analysis to identify and quantify dominant themes and concepts. The concept analysis process involved systematic processing of written and oral communications to quantitatively interpret complex phenomena.

Online focus groups were conducted following a semi-structured discussion guide, which allowed for methodological consistency while providing flexibility for participants to express specific viewpoints. Session recordings were transcribed and thoroughly analyzed by the national research teams, contributing to the reliability and depth of qualitative insights.

The feasibility study represented a systematic assessment of technical, economic, organizational, legal, time-related factors, and the engagement of key stakeholders for the implementation of the mentoring model. Each partner organization applied predefined criteria and templates for evaluation, enabling comparable, precise, and reliable conclusions regarding the sustainability and practical applicability of mentoring programs within their national contexts.

9 DRAFT RESEARCH STRUCTURE AT NATIONAL LEVEL

Following the national data analysis, each partner organization is tasked with preparing a Draft Research Report summarizing their key findings. This report should integrate all research components — desk research, surveys, focus groups, and feasibility studies — to provide a comprehensive overview of the country-specific realities and challenges faced by young creatives in the Cultural and Creative Industries (CCI) sector.

The draft report will be submitted to the activity coordinator, NVO GLAS, who oversees the research activities and will consolidate all national reports into a comprehensive comparative analysis. Each partner must ensure that their report is submitted in English, in either Word or PDF format, and strictly adheres to the following structured outline, based on detailed

guidelines provided for each research component, to maintain consistency and facilitate effective synthesis.

9.1 Structure of the Draft Research Report

1. Introduction

- Summary of the research scope and objectives
- Purpose and relevance within the national context
- Overview of research methodology

2. Research Findings

2.1 Desk Research

- Summary of secondary data analysis including academic literature, official reports, statistics, and policy documents relevant to youth in the CCI sector.

2.2 Thematic Analysis of Survey and Focus Group Data

This section combines quantitative data from online questionnaires with qualitative insights from focus groups, structured around four key thematic areas:

I Skills Gaps and Training Needs

- Quantitative findings on employment history, income stability, career transition intentions, and the role of creativity in wellbeing.
- Qualitative insights into perceived skill shortages and training priorities as expressed by participants.

II Barriers to Professional Growth

- Survey data illustrating individual and systemic obstacles such as skill deficits, market challenges, discrimination, and decision-making factors.
- Focus group narratives highlighting personal and structural barriers to career advancement.

III Support Systems and Resources

- Data on the types of support young creatives currently access or seek, with emphasis on soft skills, intercultural competencies, and social impact.
- Participants' descriptions of effective support mechanisms and unmet needs.

IV Preferences and Challenges in Non-Formal Learning

- Survey responses on favored non-formal education formats and learning approaches.
- Focus group discussions addressing access difficulties and engagement barriers with such opportunities.

3. Conclusions, Recommendations, and Lessons Learned

- Integrated summary of key findings from all research components, setting the stage for the feasibility study.

4. Feasibility Study Results

- 4.1 Technical and Technological Feasibility
- 4.2 Economic Feasibility
- 4.3 Organizational Feasibility
- 4.4 Legal and Regulatory Feasibility
- 4.5 Time Feasibility
- 4.6 Stakeholder Engagement and Risk Assessment

5. Recommendations for the Mentoring Model Design

- Tailored suggestions for mentoring structures, formats, and implementation strategies based on research evidence.

6. Final Conclusions and Next Steps

- Strategic guidance for project continuation and further development phases.

10 FINAL REPORT CONSOLIDATION AND STRUCTURE

Upon receiving all national Draft Research Reports, NVO GLAS, as the activity coordinator, undertakes the crucial task of consolidating these documents into a single, cohesive comprehensive report. This process includes several key steps:

- **Data Harmonization:** Ensuring that the presentation of data across all reports follows a consistent format and style, facilitating clear comparison and integration of findings from diverse sources and countries.
- **Cross-Country Comparative Analysis:** Systematically comparing results to identify common trends, challenges, and opportunities faced by young creatives within the Cultural and Creative Industries (CCI) sector across the partner countries. This includes highlighting both convergences and divergences in skill gaps, barriers, support mechanisms, and educational preferences identified in the national studies.
- **Synthesis of Best Practices:** Extracting and documenting effective strategies, innovative approaches, and successful mentoring models from each country to inform the development of scalable and adaptable solutions applicable across the region.
- **Methodological Consistency and Quality Control:** Reviewing all submitted data and analyses to verify adherence to the agreed research methodology, ensuring data reliability, validity, and overall quality. Any discrepancies or gaps are addressed through dialogue with the respective partners.
- **Insightful Reporting:** Developing a well-structured, accessible, and insightful final comparative report that clearly articulates country-specific contexts while providing an integrated regional perspective. This report will serve as a foundational document for

guiding subsequent project phases, including the design of the mentoring model and policy recommendations.

This comprehensive consolidation and comparative analysis are essential to maximize the value of the research efforts, enhance mutual learning among partners, and support evidence-based decision-making aimed at empowering young creatives in the CCI sector.

10.1 Structure of the Final Consolidated Research Report

The Final Consolidated Research Report, prepared by NVO GLAS after harmonizing all national draft reports, will follow a structured format designed to present a clear, comprehensive, and comparative overview of the research outcomes across all partner countries. This structure builds on the thematic and methodological approach used in the national drafts, ensuring consistency and enabling effective cross-country analysis. The report will be prepared in English and delivered in PDF format to all project partners. It will also be widely promoted through the project's social media channels to maximize visibility and engagement within the Cultural and Creative Industries community. Furthermore, this comprehensive document will serve as a foundational resource for the development of the DigiCreate Methodology for non-formal education and will support other project activities and future initiatives aimed at enhancing skills and opportunities for young creatives throughout the partner countries.

1. Introduction

- Overview of the project's scope and objectives at the regional level
- Importance and relevance of the research within the broader CCI sector across partner countries
- Summary of the combined research methodology and data collection processes

2. Comparative Research Findings

This section synthesizes data from all countries and is organized into key thematic areas reflecting the core research questions and components:

2.1 Desk Research Synthesis

- Integrated analysis of secondary data sources, including academic literature, official reports, statistics, and policy frameworks relevant to young creatives in the CCI sector across participating countries

2.2 Thematic Analysis of Quantitative and Qualitative Data

This part merges quantitative survey results with qualitative focus group insights, structured around four main thematic areas:

I Skills Gaps and Training Needs

Comparative findings on employment histories, income stability, career transition plans, and the role of creativity in personal and societal wellbeing across countries

II Barriers to Professional Growth

Cross-national perspectives on individual and systemic challenges including skill deficiencies, market limitations, discrimination, and professional development decisions

III Support Systems and Resources

Analysis of the availability and use of support mechanisms, focusing on soft skills development, intercultural competence, and opportunities for social impact

IV Preferences and Challenges in Non-Formal Learning

Preferences for educational formats and learning approaches, alongside obstacles in accessing or engaging with non-formal education

3. Integrated Conclusions, Recommendations, and Lessons Learned

- Summary of key insights emerging from the combined research components
- Contextualized recommendations to inform subsequent phases of the project

4. Feasibility Study Results

A harmonized evaluation of mentoring program feasibility, covering:

- 4.1 Technical and Technological Feasibility
- 4.2 Economic Feasibility
- 4.3 Organizational Feasibility
- 4.4 Legal and Regulatory Feasibility
- 4.5 Time Feasibility
- 4.6 Stakeholder Engagement and Risk Assessment

5. Recommendations for Mentoring Model Design

- Evidence-based proposals for mentoring structures, implementation strategies, and program formats suitable across different national contexts

6. Final Conclusions and Next Steps

- Strategic guidance on project continuation, potential scalability, and further development activities

11 RESEARCH TIMEFRAME

The research process for this project follows a structured and collaborative timeline, ensuring consistency, quality, and timely implementation across all six participating countries: Germany, Portugal, Spain, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro. The following schedule outlines all key phases of research development, data collection, analysis, and reporting:

Activity	Deadline
Submission of the first draft of the universal research methodology and feasibility study guide by NVO GLAS to all consortium members	20 June 2025
Deadline for partner organizations to provide feedback, context-specific inputs, and suggestions	30 June 2025
Online consortium meeting to clarify feedback and align on methodology (if needed)	Late June 2025
Final version of the research methodology and feasibility study guide distributed by NVO GLAS	10 July 2025
Implementation of data collection in all partner countries (desk research, online questionnaire, focus groups, feasibility study)	July – September 2025
Deadline for submission of all national research reports and feasibility studies (in English) to NVO GLAS	30 November 2025
Deadline for NVO GLAS to draft the transnational comparative research publication	31 January 2026
Deadline for partners to provide feedback and additional input on the draft publication	15 February 2026
Finalization of the transnational research publication by NVO GLAS	28 February 2026

This timeline ensures timely coordination and delivery of all research components and allows adequate time for cross-country analysis, feedback integration, and preparation of a high-quality final publication that will serve as the basis for the DigiCreate Methodology and mentoring model development.

