

Focus Group Report Template WP2

INTRODUCTION

Date and Time: 20.January 2025, 9:00-12:00 a.m.

Location: Obere Augartenstraße 20, 1020 Vienna, Austria

Objective: To gain insights into the training needs of deaf young people in the area of electronic skills.

METHODOLOGY

Participants: 5

Facilitators: Marietta Adlbrecht, Thomas Pickel, Chiara Mayer

Data Collection Methods: Workshop

KEY FINDINGS

Training Needs: Digital Literacy, Coding, and Computational Thinking among Deaf Young People

- **Digital Literacy:** Many deaf young people have basic experience with digital tools, but often lack structured training—especially in areas such as critical thinking, digital safety, and effective online communication. Accessibility barriers, such as a lack of content in sign language or plain language, make deeper engagement difficult.
- **Coding:** There is growing interest in learning to code, especially when inclusive and visually supported teaching methods are used. However, access to barrier-free coding education remains limited in many regions.
- **Computational Thinking:** This area is often underdeveloped among deaf youth due to limited access to appropriate learning opportunities, lack of integration in mainstream education, and insufficient accessible learning materials. Key skills like logical reasoning, pattern recognition, and problem-solving are frequently overlooked.
- **Identified Barriers:**
 - Lack of materials in sign language or plain language
 - Few trainers skilled in both sign language and digital skills
 - Low awareness of available accessible training opportunities
- **Opportunities and Potential:**
 - Growing demand for inclusive digital education
 - Increasing visibility of deaf professionals in the ICT sector
 - Digital platforms and visual learning tools can help close existing gaps

Education Preferences:

The preferences of deaf young people indicate that **personal guidance**, **visual accessibility**, and **social interaction** play a key role in their learning experiences. These aspects became evident both in preparatory discussions and during the follow-up workshop.

Preferred Learning Methods:

- **Learning with a mentor**
A large number of participants favour learning with a mentor, as this method provides individual support, clear structure, and immediate feedback. For deaf learners, direct communication — ideally in sign language — is particularly important for reducing barriers and building confidence in the learning process.
- **Independent learning at home using tutorials**
Many young people appreciate the opportunity to learn independently at their own pace. This method is particularly appealing to those who value autonomy and flexibility. However, it requires access to high-quality, accessible materials — such as video tutorials in sign language or texts in plain language.
- **Peer learning (learning with a partner)**
Partner-based learning is also a popular method. It encourages active engagement with the material while fostering social interaction. For deaf youth, learning together with peers who share similar communication needs can be especially motivating and supportive.
- **Combination of different methods (blended learning)**
Some participants prefer a mix of learning approaches, tailored to their individual needs. This may include a combination of in-person mentoring, digital self-learning phases, and switching between individual and group work. Such hybrid models offer greater flexibility and accommodate diverse learning preferences.

Preferred Topics:

Deaf young people expressed strong interest in **practical and creative topics in the digital field**, including:

- Basic digital skills and media literacy
- Introduction to coding and programming
- Visual design and digital content creation
- Computer-based work and tools
- Developing small, real-life-oriented digital projects

Barriers to Learning:

The results indicate that the main learning barriers faced by deaf young people can be grouped into two key categories: **Accessibility Issues** and **Technological Challenges**.

1. Accessibility Issues

- **Limited access to accessible learning materials**
There is only a limited availability of materials in sign language or in plain, easy-to-understand language. Many digital learning resources are highly text-based or audio-oriented, and are therefore only partially usable for deaf learners.
- **Insufficient didactic adaptations**
Learning formats are often not tailored to visual forms of communication or the specific learning pace of deaf individuals. The needs of visual learners are frequently not adequately considered.



- **Restricted access to qualified professionals**
There is a lack of trainers who possess both digital expertise and sign language skills. This can limit both the quality and accessibility of educational offerings.
- **Social barriers in learning environments**
In mixed learning groups, deaf learners may experience insufficient inclusion, particularly if communication barriers exist or if their peers and educators are not sensitised to their needs.

2. Technological Challenges

- **Unequal access to technology**
Not all young people have access to suitable devices or a stable internet connection. This can hinder participation in digital learning formats.
- **Lack of accessible digital platforms and tools**
Many digital learning environments offer little or no support for deaf users – for example, missing subtitles, absence of sign language videos, or complicated navigation structures.

These findings highlight the importance of adapting learning environments – both in terms of content and technology – more effectively to the needs of deaf young people. An inclusive educational approach requires comprehensive accessibility, appropriate pedagogical design, and the targeted use of supportive technologies.

Support and Resources:

- iMoox
- GESTU
- SignTech
- Equalizent

ANALYSIS

Themes and Patterns:

Common Themes and Patterns from the Discussions

The findings indicate that several overarching themes and recurring patterns emerged, which are particularly relevant for the development of inclusive educational opportunities in the digital field for deaf young people:

1. **Need for Accessible Learning Formats**
A central issue is the need to design learning materials and platforms that are visually accessible. Resources in sign language, easy-to-read texts, and visually supported content were consistently identified as essential for effective learning.
2. **Desire for Personal Support**
Many participants highlighted the importance of mentoring, individual support, or learning in social contexts (e.g., peer work). Direct communication – ideally in sign language – strengthens confidence in the learning process and helps to reduce barriers.
3. **Strong Interest in Practical and Creative Content**
There was a clear interest in hands-on, application-oriented digital topics – such

as basic programming, digital design, or the development of small projects with real-life relevance.

4. **Challenges Due to Technical and Structural Barriers**

Participants repeatedly mentioned obstacles such as inadequate technical equipment, lack of sign language skills among trainers, or inaccessible digital platforms. These issues limit consistent and independent participation in learning opportunities.

5. **Value of Peer Learning and Collaborative Learning**

Learning together with peers was perceived as highly motivating. The possibility to support and learn from one another was described as a key element of successful learning.

6. **Lack of Systematic Resources and Sustainable Structures**

Despite existing good practices, there is a noticeable gap in long-term, inclusive educational offerings. Targeted investment in materials, qualified personnel, and digital infrastructure is needed to close this gap.

These patterns offer valuable insights for the development of inclusive and needs-oriented educational formats in the field of digital skills.

Participant Quotes:

Selected statements from participants highlighting key insights:

On accessibility and learning materials:

"Many tutorials are hard to understand because they don't include sign language or clear visual explanations. It would be a big help if more content was made specifically for deaf people."

On personal support and mentoring:

"A mentor who signs makes a big difference. I feel more confident asking questions and understanding the tasks."

On independent learning:

"I like learning at my own pace – but only if the materials are accessible and I can really understand them."

On learning with others:

"Learning together with other deaf people motivates me. We understand each other without needing many words and can support each other."

On technical barriers:

"Some learning platforms don't work well for me, or they're too complicated – especially when there's no sign language included."

These quotes reflect the experiences and perspectives of deaf young people and emphasize the importance of accessible, supportive, and inclusive learning opportunities.

Participant Evaluation [Gather votes from the participants]:

1. General Quality of the report in relation to coding and programming needs is 3.
2. The interactive map overall is 3.
3. The good practices provided are 3.
4. The accessibility and usability of the interactive map is 3.

5. The standard of translation in written languages and sign language are 3.
6. The quality of the signs (where applicable) is 3.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Training Programs:

1. Training Programs: Recommendations for Designing Educational Offers

The findings clearly indicate that training programs for deaf young people in the digital field must meet specific criteria to be effective, accessible, and sustainable. Based on this, the following recommendations are proposed:

a) Development of accessible learning materials

Training content should be provided in sign language, easy-to-read language, and supported with visual elements (e.g. animations, diagrams, subtitles). This ensures inclusive participation and reduces comprehension barriers.

b) Use of sign language-competent trainers

The qualifications of trainers are crucial. It is recommended to specifically employ professionals with both digital skills and sign language competence, or to strengthen these skills through targeted training.

c) Focus on practical and creative content

Programs should emphasize real-life, hands-on applications, such as small coding projects, digital design, or solving problems based on everyday situations. This approach increases motivation and promotes real-world transfer of skills.

d) Modular structure and flexible formats

Training should be organized in modules to allow for individualized learning paths. A combination of in-person sessions, digital self-learning, and group work supports different learning styles and provides greater flexibility.

e) Integration of peer learning and mentoring

Involving peer groups and mentors – ideally with hearing impairments themselves – fosters a sense of community and enables supportive, peer-level learning environments.

f) Involvement of young people in the design process

Deaf youth should be actively involved in the development of training programs to ensure that the content and methods truly meet their needs and expectations. These recommendations aim to create inclusive and future-oriented training offers that not only convey knowledge but also promote participation, self-efficacy, and digital literacy.

Support Mechanisms:

Support Mechanisms: Suggestions for Support Structures and Resources

Based on the findings, the following support mechanisms are recommended to enhance the effectiveness and inclusiveness of digital education for deaf youth:

a) Development of accessible digital infrastructure

Ensure that digital learning environments, platforms, and tools are fully accessible –

including sign language interpretation, subtitles, easy-to-read content, and visual guidance.

b) Establishment of mentoring networks

Support systems should include peer mentoring or guidance by deaf professionals to promote motivation, self-confidence, and practical advice from shared experience.

c) Capacity building for educators and trainers

Regular training for professionals in both digital literacy and sign language improves the quality and accessibility of education. This includes training in inclusive didactics and the use of assistive technologies.

d) Provision of technical equipment and internet access

Programs should offer support or guidance for accessing suitable devices and stable internet connections, especially for youth with limited resources.

e) Creation of inclusive learning communities

Facilitating safe and inclusive spaces for deaf youth to collaborate, share, and learn together supports long-term engagement and reduces isolation.

Next Steps:

Outline for Continued Implementation Based on the Findings

The following steps are suggested to ensure continued development and implementation of the project's goals:

a) Detailed analysis of participant feedback

Feedback from participants will be systematically reviewed to identify specific needs, challenges, and opportunities for improvement—particularly in relation to accessibility, content relevance, and usability.

b) Internal coordination within the project consortium

The results will be discussed across partner organizations to align priorities and jointly decide on adjustments and further developments.

c) Improvement of the interactive map and good practice repository

Based on user input, the interactive map will be optimized to enhance its accessibility, user-friendliness, and content quality.

d) Inclusion of broader perspectives

Additional stakeholders, such as associated partners, experts, and representatives from the deaf community, will be involved in refining outputs to ensure a broader, inclusive basis.

e) Strategic planning for dissemination and practical use

A dissemination plan will be developed to ensure the long-term use and visibility of the project's materials, tools, and best practices across relevant educational and support settings.

Conclusion

Summary:

Summary

This report summarizes key findings regarding the educational needs of deaf young people in the field of digital skills. It identifies preferred learning approaches, existing

barriers, and essential conditions for inclusive training opportunities. The results highlight the importance of accessible materials, personal support, practical content, and structural adjustments as critical factors for successful learning. Based on these insights, recommendations for future training formats, support mechanisms, and concrete next steps were developed.

Acknowledgments:

We would like to thank all individuals who contributed their knowledge, experiences, and feedback to the development of this report. Our thanks also go to those who supported the implementation of the activities both organizationally and content-wise.

Youth Council Report Template

Introduction

Date and Time: 28.January 2025, 9:00 – 14:00

Location: Obere Augartenstraße 20, 1020 Vienna

Purpose: To provide feedback and insights on the goals, activities, and outcomes of the project.

Methodology

Participants: 12

Facilitators: Thorben Pachler, Jennifer Schügerl, Marian Molnar

Data Collection Methods: Survey, Workshop

Key Findings

Project Goals and Activities:

Project Goals and Activities

Participants generally viewed the overarching goals of the project—namely, promoting digital skills and ensuring access to inclusive learning opportunities—as relevant and timely. It was especially appreciated that the project actively included the perspectives of deaf youth and gave them a voice in the process. However, some participants expressed the wish for deeper involvement in the concrete implementation of certain activities.

Electronic Skills Training Needs:

There was strong interest among participants in gaining practical skills in areas such as digital communication, media creation, and basic programming. Visually accessible and easy-to-understand learning content tailored to young people's everyday lives was seen as particularly valuable. Topics like digital safety and confident, autonomous use of digital tools were also frequently mentioned.

Best Practices:

Training approaches that prioritized visual clarity—such as the use of sign language, subtitles, and simple explanations—were highlighted as especially effective. Peer learning, opportunities for one-on-one support, and creative project-based tasks were also seen as impactful. The most successful formats were those that ensured both digital and social accessibility.

Analysis

Themes and Patterns:

Common Themes and Patterns

Several recurring themes and patterns emerged from the participants' feedback and discussions, offering valuable insights for the development of digital education formats for deaf youth:

- **Importance of Accessible Communication:**
The need for materials in sign language, with subtitles or in plain language was a consistent point across all responses. Visual accessibility was considered essential for effective learning.
- **Desire for Active Participation:**
Many young people expressed a wish to be more than just participants—they wanted to contribute to shaping the content and formats, emphasizing the value of co-creation.
- **Strong Interest in Practical Applications:**
Topics with real-life relevance—such as social media, media production, or coding through creative projects—were particularly well received and perceived as motivating.
- **Collaborative Learning as a Source of Motivation:**
Learning in groups, especially with other deaf peers, was experienced as motivating and supportive. Peer interaction played a key role in successful engagement.
- **Uncertainty in Using Digital Tools:**
Some participants reported difficulties when starting with digital learning

platforms or new technologies, particularly when clear support structures were lacking.

Participant Quotes:

Selected statements from young people and trainers that highlight key insights:

- *“When something is explained in sign language, I understand it much faster. Without it, it often feels frustrating.”*
- *“I wish I could help design the courses. We know best what we need.”*
- *“I enjoy tasks the most where I can create something or try things out myself.”*
- *“Learning alone is sometimes hard. In a group, it’s easier—we support each other.”*
- *“At first, I was afraid to use the platform because I didn’t know how it worked.”*

These quotes reflect the participants’ experiences and offer important perspectives on what facilitates or hinders inclusive and effective digital learning.

Participant Evaluation [Gather votes from the participants]:

1. General Quality of the report in relation to coding and programming needs is 3.
2. Completeness of the report in relation to coding and programming needs is 3.
3. Clarity of the report in relation to coding and programming needs is 3.
4. The interactive map overall is 2.
5. The Good practices provided are 3.
6. Clarity (content) of good practices provided are 3.
7. The accessibility and usability of the interactive map is 2.
8. The interactive map in terms of effectiveness is 3.
9. The standard of translation in written languages and sign language are 3.
10. The quality of the signs (where applicable) is 3.

Recommendations

Project Improvements:

Based on participant feedback, the following suggestions for improving the project can be made:

- **Stronger youth involvement:**
Young people expressed a desire to be more actively involved in shaping the project,



such as in topic selection or the development of learning materials. Participation formats should be integrated early and continuously.

- **Clearer communication and low-threshold access:**
Information about the project, events, or digital offerings should be presented clearly, supported visually, and available in sign language to foster accessibility and inclusion.
- **Regular reflection and feedback loops:**
Scheduled feedback sessions allow for continuous evaluation and flexible adaptation of the project to the group's evolving needs.

Training and Resources:

Development of practical, relevant training opportunities:

Content should reflect real-life contexts—e.g., media creation, social media, digital tools, or introductory programming.

- **Provision of accessible learning materials:**
Learning content should be made available in sign language, plain language, with subtitles, and supported by visual elements. A central repository for such materials would be helpful.
- **Promotion of peer learning and mentoring:**
Exchange among young people and with experienced trainers—ideally those with hearing impairments themselves—builds motivation and self-confidence.

Next Steps:

Deeper analysis of youth feedback:

The results should be reviewed in more detail and shared back with the participants for validation.

- **Coordination with project partners:**
The recommendations should be discussed within the project consortium and incorporated into future planning.
- **Further development of training formats:**
Existing formats should be adapted based on the findings, and new inclusive educational offers should be developed.



Conclusion

Summary:

This report summarizes key insights shared by young participants and trainers regarding the requirements for digital education and inclusive learning environments. It highlights the importance of accessible content, hands-on and creative learning opportunities, as well as peer learning and mentoring. The feedback gathered serves as a foundation for recommendations aimed at developing training formats, strengthening participation, and building sustainable support structures.

Acknowledgments:

We sincerely thank all individuals who contributed their experiences, perspectives, and feedback to the development of this report. We also extend our gratitude to those who supported the implementation of the activities both logistically and content-wise.