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University to Society Collaborations for Inclusive Digital Transformation in the Western Balkans

Methodology and Instruments for the pre-evaluation and need assessment of digital literacies

This document is developed by SCiDEV as task leader for the Deliverable 2.2: Study on Results of WP2: Digital Literacies Accelerator Programme





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Aim of assessment

The central objective of this exercise is to conduct an evaluation of the current state of digital literacies among two primary groups within the academic sphere: lecturers and students in 4 partner universities of the U2SID project, namely: University of Shkodra, University of Korca, Mediterranean University of Albania and University of Montenegro. The study recognizes the increasingly role those digital competencies play in both delivering and accessing higher education. By assessing the needs, the study intends to identify gaps in knowledge, skills, and infrastructure that may be hindering the effective use of digital tools and resources in teaching and learning environments in the universities involved in this project in Albania and Montenegro.

Furthermore, the study seeks to incorporate diverse perspectives by engaging with stakeholders who are directly or indirectly impacted by the digital literacies of lecturers and students. These stakeholders may include administrative staff, IT personnel, policy makers, and employers. The input from these groups will provide a multi-dimensional understanding of digital literacies needs, expectations, and the potential barriers to implementing digital literacies programs.

Methodology approach

The methodology for this need assessment exercise on digital literacies at university level is crafted to facilitate an understanding of the subject within academic contexts of partner universities involved in the project and to inform with evidence the next activities to be implemented by the project partners such as the Digital Literacies Accelerator Programme (WP2) and Digital Transformation Challenge (WP3). This approach embraces both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods, harmonizing them to draw a reliable picture of the digital literacies needs and gaps in these academic contexts.

Central to the quantitative dimension of our research are online questionnaires. These instruments are designed to quantitatively assess lecturers' and students' self-reported competencies in digital literacy, their habitual use of digital resources, their preferences for certain technologies, and their perceived needs for further support and development. Ensuring a representative sample in each partner university is important; therefore, the study will encompass a diverse cross-section of departments, faculties, and educational levels both Bachelor and Masters. Subsequent statistical analyses will scrutinize this quantitative information to identify prevalent patterns and trends, which will provide insights for recommendations for the next activities to be implemented by the project partners

Parallel to this, the qualitative component through structured focus group discussions will delve into the more subjective dimensions of digital literacies. These sessions are planned to reveal the attitudes, personal experiences, and the various contextual factors that shape individuals' engagement with digital tools and resources. Discussion guides, prepared in advance and based on literature reviews, will steer conversations to meaningful depths. The discussions will be recorded via audio-visual means, transcriptions, and detailed notes, ensuring that none of the nuanced discourse is lost. Focus groups will be organized by each partner with lecturers, students and stakeholders.

The deliberate integration of quantitative and qualitative data—known as data triangulation—not only lends credibility to the findings by cross-verifying data points but also minimizes the biases that any single method might introduce. Here, the breadth of understanding is drawn from quantifiable data, while the qualitative data add





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context and depth, providing a fuller understanding of digital literacy needs. All this is also combined with literature review. The synthesis of findings from these dual streams of research will culminate in a detailed report, laying out the digital literacy landscape as it stands within the participant universities and identifying specific needs. The findings of the need assessment are relevant for participating partner universities and cannot be generalised to entire academic contexts in Albania and Montenegro.

Methods

For the quantitative portion of our study, we'll be gathering data through specially designed questionnaires. These will be distributed to both lecturers and students to measure their own perceptions of their digital literacy skills, how often and in what ways they use digital tools, and what they feel they need to improve. We're aiming for a sample that captures the full spectrum of university life, from various disciplines and both undergraduate and postgraduate levels, to make sure our findings are well-rounded. Questionnaires will be administered online.

Alongside the questionnaire, our study will incorporate structured focus group discussions to delve into the more nuanced aspects of digital literacy. We'll convene groups of individuals to engage in deep, guided conversations that will shed light on their personal attitudes, experiences, and the specific circumstances that shape their use and understanding of digital tools. These discussions will be steered by discussion guides that are informed by our initial literature review and the early results of the questionnaires, ensuring that each session probes the topics most relevant to our research questions. To ensure we capture the richness of these discussions, we will record them using both audio-visual equipment and detailed note-taking. This will allow us to preserve the full breadth of discussion for subsequent detailed analysis. Focus groups will be organized in person.

Digital literacies definition

- Basic Computer Skills: Using an operating system, managing files, and understanding basic hardware.
- Internet Navigation: Using search engines, evaluating online sources, and understanding internet safety.
- Productivity Software: Proficiency in word processing, spreadsheets, and presentation software.
- Communication Tools: Email, instant messaging, video conferencing, and collaboration platforms.
- Digital Creation: Basic photo editing, video production, or website creation.
- Information Literacy: Finding, evaluating, using, and citing digital information.
- Cybersecurity Awareness: Understanding of personal data protection, password security, and awareness of phishing scams.
- Social Media Literacy: Creating content, understanding digital footprints, and privacy settings.
- Data Literacy: Understanding of data collection, analysis, and interpretation.
- E-Learning Platforms: Navigating online learning systems and digital libraries.

