



Workshop Report

Germany

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1 Introduction

The purpose of this Workshop Report is to provide an overview of the pilots conducted in the frame of the project FITING4YOU – Mapping the Financial and Time loss Impact of gamiNG and social media on YOUNg people with special needs, 2023 - 3 - DE04 - KA210 - YOU - 000175113, which has been co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union.

The workshops were designed for the target group of "young people with additional needs" to raise awareness about moderate time and money consumption related to gaming and social media and to avoid the risks and dangers of cybercrime associated with financial losses.

This report contains information about the workshop settings and event descriptions, as well as evaluation results with feedback from young people. It is important to note that the evaluation results are only relevant to this target audience and cannot be generalized.

2 Workshop setting

The workshops took place in an educational institution that supports young people on their individual paths through training and careers, helping them to fully develop their potential.

At this school, young people with additional needs work in small groups. To reach the number of young people specified in the application of this project, two workshops were held with two different groups.

Both groups consisted of 8 young people. The first group was dominated by young men. The second group was dominated by young women. With the two workshops, we reached a total of 16 young people: 9 young men and 7 young women.

The young people were between 14 and 17 years old. The unequal gender distribution in the respective groups also allowed us to address gender-specific interests more specifically. The workshop of the boys' group thematically was focused more on gaming, while the second group was focused more on social media.

The duration and methods of the workshops were discussed with the educators of the groups, who know which format and length are best suited to the participants. Workshops lasting 2.5 hours were agreed upon in advance with the educators. Based on discussions with the educators, the topics of the workshops were specifically tailored to the needs of the young people in order to offer them tailor-made content.

The workshops were held in seminar rooms. Young people were free to choose their seating arrangement, ensuring a relaxed atmosphere. The workshop settings facilitated a productive and pleasant learning environment and encouraged knowledge exchange as well as active participation from participants.

3 Workshop provider, method and content

3.1 Workshop provider

The workshops were provided by MMT Academics. For the purpose of the pilots conducted in the frame of FITING4YOU project, workshops were designed to meet the needs of young people.

3.2 Methods

The workshops seamlessly integrated various methods to make the workshops interactive and engaging for young people and to maintain motivation. These included presentations, brainstorming, role-playing, and discussions.

3.3 Content

The workshop's introductory section explained the objectives of the event. This was followed by a relaxed discussion about young people's digital media use. This also served to get to know the participants better.

The following topics were discussed in the workshop:

Mechanisms that affect time and money consumption

The mechanisms that can arise from the use of gaming and social media and can lead to the popularity or excessive use of these media were discussed. These included, among others, the provision of quick success through level advancements or rewards, points; constantly refreshing the feed or uploading new content; dopamine release; and pay to win. These mechanisms were discussed through brainstorming in an open session.

Factors that can cause addictive behaviour

Based on the mechanisms listed above, factors that can lead to addictive behaviour were identified and discussed. Habits that can lead to addictive behaviour were collected, such as "logging in to relax" or "staying logged in and not turning off the phone at night or putting it on airplane mode"; "customizing my digital avatar"; "feeling a sense of belonging in video games"; and inconsistent use of gaming like "just one more round" or social media content "just watching for a bit".

Strategies for better time management

A presentation provided participants with interesting insights into various time management strategies, such as time tracking, setting daily limits, setting alarms, using apps that measure screen time, taking breaks, creating cell phone-free zones, establishing digital detox days, creating alternative activities, and analysing their own gaming or social media behaviour. The advantages and disadvantages of these strategies were discussed in an open discussion.

Knowledge transfer about in-game buys

A presentation highlighted the possible dangers of in-app purchases. Possible cost traps in various games were discussed. Young people engaged in lively discussions about their favourite games and what they spend money on in online games.

Strategies for Moderate Spending

The strategies discussed included setting a monthly budget, using prepaid cards instead of online purchases, avoiding impulse purchases, taking time, and perhaps receiving the desired items as gifts, and keeping track of spending. The advantages and disadvantages of these strategies were critically discussed.

Strategies for more digital safety while gaming and using social media

First, participants shared information about the security risks and dangers that can arise when using gaming and social media platforms. Participants shared stories about missing and hacked accounts and the difficulties associated with creating new accounts. In a second step, they developed strategies such as secure passwords and password storage systems.

4 Event Descriptions

Young people participated attentively and actively. They were open to the topics and enjoyed the workshops. This observation was also confirmed in the evaluation. The open discussions and integrated role-playing activities helped to engage the participants.

Young people participating in the workshops were already familiar with the key topics. Many of the strategies discussed were also known, even if they were not consistently applied by the participants.

There was a great need for discussion among the young people on the various topics, which provided a productive basis for the evaluation.

Gender-specific interests were addressed. It was found that young women are less interested in gaming. It was found that both genders were interested in social media.

5 Evaluation

5.1 Participant Current Status

Because of social media/gaming it has happened that I...		G1 No of "yes"	G2 No of "yes"	Total
a	was late to school or late to something else.	8	8	16
b	slept too little at night and felt tired.	8	8	16
c	bought something I don't need.	7	3	10
d	felt sad or angry.	8	5	13
e	forgot or lacked the time to do schoolwork or other work.	8	8	16

Group discussion:

Because of social media/gaming it has happened that I...

- **was late to school or late to something else**
 - Most of the participants reported being late for something or often feeling tired from using digital media for too long.
 - Young people reported that excessive media consumption is causing them difficulties not only at school but also with personal interactions, with family or friends. For example, one person said, "I cancelled on someone four times, and after that, they won't see me again."
 - "We're always late, or we don't go at all, and then we regret it over and over again. We end up regretting playing like that and losing a lot because of it", said one of the participants.
 - Participants know they'll be online too long. And if they can't be on time next day, they often choose not to go anywhere at all (whether it's school or anything else like doctor appointment) and stay at home and online.

- "Then you stop going", said one participants. This young man must commute 2.5 hours a day to school and another 2.5 hours back home. If he misses the bus or train, he can't get anywhere at all. As a result, young people in rural areas are cumulatively affected by gaming and social media, because even small delays can have fatal consequences for their daily routine.
- But it's not just appointments that can be difficult; errands can also be delayed or not completed at all, for example, because they have forgotten to buy groceries.
- Spending money related to gaming and social media not only has financial consequences for online spending, but also, if they don't go shopping on Saturday night, they have to resort to alternatives like fast food, which is more expensive.
- **slept too little at night and felt tired**
 - Most of the participants reported feeling tired because they are using gaming of gaming or social media for too long.
 - A young woman told that yesterday she actually wanted to fall asleep around 11 p.m., but then it was 3 a.m. again, and she had to get up shortly after 5 a.m. to catch the bus.
 - Participants complained about feeling constantly tired from school, the three-hour bus ride, and social media. "There is too little time to sleep," the participants reported.

- **bought something I don't need**

- Some participants stated that they need all the items they buy. "In video games, you can somehow use everything you buy, because otherwise you'd have to spend ages unlocking many features. Time for money, and money for time."
- "The most expensive games are the ones that are initially free, because you keep putting money in afterward."
- Participants complained that the products were very expensive from influencers advertised on social media.
- Influencer's products available in retail stores are well-known and purchased by the participants. Participants liked to buy drinks from influencers, test them, and share their opinions about them.

- **felt sad or angry**

- "In games, you get angry and furious again and again and throw your controller against the wall." Freaking out is considered a code of conduct when playing online games. This, in turn, has indirect financial consequences for young people, as they have to buy the broken items again.
- Participants reported feeling sad and sometimes depressed when faced with all the great images, things, and stories on social media. Even though they know the videos and photos are edited and manipulated with filters, they often still feel sad.

- **forgot or lacked the time to do schoolwork or other work**
- Participants reported that they often neglect necessary tasks, such as shopping for groceries for the evening or the next day.
- “Time always goes by so quickly. You just want to play for a bit, and then it's been another three hours” said one of the participants.
- Time consumption on gaming and social media is often misjudged by the participants.
- Participants didn't like to use features to check how much time they're actually playing or using social media.

Would they react differently after this workshop?

- A direct improvement isn't immediately apparent after the workshops by the participating young people. However, they expressed a willingness to continue engaging with the topic. A step toward more moderate media consumption was taken, and participants were made aware of issues that had apparently not been addressed so directly before the workshops. They began to engage with the topic and reflect on their time and money. They questioned their own behavior. The extent and impact of gaming and social media use were discussed, and connections were established.
- Young people knew what they needed to change, but they also knew that it was difficult to make it happen.

5.2 General Workshop Reception

The workshop was...		Gr 1 No of "yes"	Gr 2 No of "yes"	Total
a	interesting	8	8	16
b	fun/nice (comfortable)	6	7	13
c	important for me	8	8	16

Group discussions

Participants were open to the topics and enjoyed the workshops. They reported that the workshops were interesting, entertaining, and important to them. Participants justified their response by saying that they spend a lot of time with these media and therefore we should talk about them more.

What did you like the most?

- "Well-explained, clear, and with many examples from digital life."
- Participants positively viewed that they were able to talk about things from their own everyday life and exchange ideas with someone about these topics.
- "Relaxed workshop on serious topics."

Was there something you did not understand? What?

- "The workshop was understandable. You know the problems, but you don't want to think about them or deal with them because you somehow regret not having dealt with them. A lot of money and time went into it. Seeing something like that can also be sad" said one of the participants.

What was a thing that you did not like so much?

- "It's uncomfortable to talk about how much time goes into these activities", said one young woman.
- "The workshop could be longer. More of it", stated one of the participants.
- In the workshops, participants reported problems with passwords, security programs, and hackers that resulted in entire accounts on gaming and social media platforms being lost and having to be repeatedly restarted. "It would also

have been good to learn special protection mechanisms to better protect ourselves against online losses such as time, money, and our own accounts," said one participant.

5.3 Learning

Today I learnt something new about...		Gr 1 No of "yes"	Gr 2 No of "yes"	Total
a	being safe when I'm gaming or online.	7	8	15
b	how I can lose money when I'm gaming or online (In-app purchases etc.).	8	8	16
c	people I look up to online (social/online role models).	6	7	13
d	how much time I spend gaming or on social media.	7	8	15
e	I didn't learn anything new.	0	0	0

Group discussion

- The participants said thank you for the discussion on the topics, the opportunity to exchange ideas and the exchange with each other, including the exchange of experiences and the search for common solutions as well as approaches to achieving a better overview of the topic of money and time.
- "Learned a lot about wasting time on social media."

5.4 Willingness to Change

In the future I will...		Gr 1 No of "yes"	Gr 2 No of "yes"	Total
a	think more (be more critical) about what I learn and do online.	6	7	13
b	be more careful when gaming or using my phone	8	8	16
c	spend less money on gaming or buying online	5	6	11
d	spend less time on my phone or computer	6	5	11
e	try new hobbies or spend more time with family and friends.	2	3	5

Group discussion

What is a way you can be safer (when gaming or) being on the internet?

- "Be more careful with passwords/have a better password system to be secure and avoid forgetting them every time", said one of the participants.
- Young people reported being more cautious about strangers when playing games due to hackers and being more afraid of being scammed when there are great offers in games (good prices for in-game currencies).
- They need to convert in-game currencies correctly to avoid large expenses, said one of the participants. He added that they need to be more careful with clickable links.
- "We must be careful when contacted by strangers", said one of the young women.

What can you do to spend less money online?

- Young people responded that they need to have a better overview of their online spending and record more precisely where the money goes. They also need to

be careful that their online accounts aren't plundered by hackers or that they lose entire accounts due to forgotten passwords.

- "Block various digital payment methods", said one of the participants.

When you see a video on TikTok or YouTube online, is what you see and what they say real?

- Young people know that they can see many filtered videos on online platforms, but they often just believe them.
- Participants know that many posts are filtered and yet still they make participants sad. Participants also knew that the videos and images were edited and many of the stories were untrue.

What do you do (enjoy/hobbies) when you are not gaming or on the internet?

Young people reported that, in addition to gaming and social media, they also engage in other online hobbies such as listening to music. Some participants said they enjoy walking the dogs, spending time with family and friends, or sleeping. No other hobbies were mentioned.

What would you like to do (more of) with your friends and family?

Some participants jokingly said they would like to play more video games with their friends and families, and others said they would like to talk and laugh more with their friends and family.

5.5 Feedback from Adult Attendees

What did you think about the workshop?

- The workshops cover a very relevant topic for young people.

- It's very interesting to see that young people are experienced in this topic, are speaking up, and are actively participating in these workshops. These groups aren't very talkative in normal classes, but with this topic, they can be activated.

Was the difficulty level and method suitable for the participants?

- The language of the workshop was understandable. It was able to reach the young people. They felt addressed and understood. Many examples made the workshops relevant and understandable to everyday life.

Was the content relevant for the participants?

- It was very important and relevant, as they are part of their lives.
- The workshop also explained many behaviors of young people that the teachers hadn't noticed or couldn't identify.

Is there a need for these kinds of offers?

- Absolutely. Young people need more programs in this area, starting long-term and much earlier in school. The difficulty with this topic is constantly adapting to new trends and staying up to date on leading figures, products, hacker attacks, and payment methods. This makes the topic very complex.

Are there other offers like this that you know of?

- There are no programs like this for our target groups. There are generally only a few external programs for our young people.

What was the best thing about this workshop?

- Gaming and social media are their topics. Young people are online every day. They notice when someone is unfamiliar with these areas and is just keen to teach them. The workshop was very authentic.
- In our school young people have additional needs and come from difficult social environments. They need tailored workshops to reach them. In these workshops young people felt involved and included. They participated and talked a lot. These things show that the workshops reached them.

What would you improve? Were any important aspects missing?

- The topics could be expanded not only financially and in terms of time.
- Young people have indicated that they want to learn more about hackers and passwords. Digital security would also be important for their integration into the job market.

Would you like to receive the results of this project via email?

- yes

6 Reflection and Sum Up

The participants in these pilot workshops are affected by a variety of disadvantaged factors, such as poverty, a difficult social environment, and learning delays. Because of these diverse factors, it is difficult to draw conclusions that relate exclusively to young people with additional learning needs in learning development. The various factors influencing these young people cannot be separated from one another. Therefore, the conclusions from the workshop evaluation are only applicable to this specific target group and cannot be generalized.

Key findings from the workshops

- ➔ As the evaluation shows, the workshops provided helpful information on mechanisms and strategies related to gaming and social media time and money consume. They offered participants the opportunity to reflect on their own gaming and social media behaviour. However, most of the strategies were already familiar to the young people but were not used or applied inadequately in everyday life.
- ➔ Gaming and social media are used across generations in families, which can prevent the implementation of mobile phone-free zones or detox days in families.

- ➔ In this age group, parents no longer have control over young people's gaming and social media behaviour. Therefore, corrections to gaming and social media habits must be made solely by the young people themselves.
- ➔ Participants in the workshops already had well-developed digital habits, and social media and gaming occupied a large portion of these young people's time outside of school. Therefore, the question for these young people was how they would fill their "gained" time if they reduced these digital activities.
- ➔ Gaming and social media appear to be an integral part of the lives and identities of young people participating in the workshops.
- ➔ Young people who struggle to get up early because they spend late nights playing games or using social media are cumulatively affected in rural areas, as even small delays can have fatal consequences for their daily lives if they rely on public transport, which is not well-developed in their region.



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