



# SOCIAL CONNECTIONS: Trainers for E-social work

IO2 Report – Tool-box for e-social work

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## Introduction

This manual intends to be a useful tool for trainers engaged in the training of social workers to help them teaching digital social work techniques.

As clearly shown during the COVID-19 pandemic, online technologies can be exploited to provide social support and a sense of belonging to vulnerable and housebound groups. However, many social workers are not confident with their digital abilities and claim for a specific training that allows them to provide high quality attention to their clients in any circumstances. As a response to these difficulties, the Erasmus+ project, [Social Connections](#) (Reference number: 2021-1-ES01-KA226-VET-095080), emerged. The aim of this innovative action, implemented from 2021 to 2023, is to develop digital pedagogical competences of continuing vocational education and training (C-VET) educators in the social sector, enabling them to develop and use high quality digital content for social inclusion of clients which are housebound because of disability, illness or COVID-19 related restrictions.

There are six European organizations behind the Social Connections project: INTRAS (Spain), is the project coordinator and has been involved in several previous European projects related to VET, ANS (Italy) being one of the first Italian organizations introducing ICT-based training methodologies in the social sector, SOSU (Denmark), educating and training social and health care professionals, Aproximar (Portugal), responsible for the creation of learning programs and training resources, Virtual Campus (Portugal), with extended experience in vocational training for SMEs and adult education and EaSI (Romania), an association and a network of the third sector from more than 15 countries. The tangible results of this project are a handbook and a toolbox, both conceived to support trainers in applying e-social work for the social inclusion of vulnerable groups.

The present document is a collection of training resources that e-social work trainers can apply to teach social professionals' practical methods and activities they can implement with their users in a digital environment.

The **first part** of the document includes a training programme aimed to teach e-social work trainers' basic knowledge and principles in relation to the use of digital tools in their usual work with clients. The theoretical background of the programme is the handbook "[Curriculum to teach e-social work](#)" developed as 1<sup>st</sup> result of the Erasmus+ Social Connection programme.

Overall, 8 modules are covered in this part of the training through 6 training sessions.

The **second part** includes four session-plans aimed to teach different practical tools and methods to implement e-social work programmes. This material was developed as a project-based learning activity in which social worker trainers have been involved as part of their upskilling programme. In detail, in each country a group of trainers, working online or in presence in small teams with the constant support of experts from the project partnership -they applied the learnt guidelines in order to develop a training module aimed to teach to social workers a specific technique / methodology of e-social work to be used with housebound users.

Each partner country focused on one module, for an overall of four modules focusing on examples of social education methodologies that could be delivered online to address social inclusion and meaningful engagement of housebound users.

The methods have been chosen as:

- proven suitable for online delivery;
- proven suitable for the social inclusion purpose
- and representative of different technologies and e-facilitation methods that could be used.

They are:

- Digital Found Poetry
- Digital Gamification
- Digital visual workshops
- Narrative gerontology and digital story telling

We hope that you find the next pages useful to the existing difficulties and challenges related to the technological field, answering to your needs to work online with your clients or learners.

We are sure that your efforts to enter the professional digital world are going to be a success!

For more information about the Social Connections project, please visit

[www.socialconnectionsproject.org](http://www.socialconnectionsproject.org)



## PART 1 - BASIC PRINCIPLES OF ONLINE TEACHING IN THE SOCIAL SECTOR



## Session 1 - PROFESSIONAL ENGAGEMENT and TEACHING, TRAINING AND LEARNING

OBJECTIVE(S)	The whole session, which will combine the contents of Chapters 1 and 3, will aim at starting from possible challenges of working online while highlighting its great potential. Thus, the learners will realize that most of them have similar troubles trying to adapt their work online and that they are able to find clever solutions. The exercise raises awareness on how to use digital technologies to offer timely and targeted guidance and to support and enhance learners' digital progress. With the final different scenarios, trainees will be more aware of taking advantage of using ICT devices and/or resources in their teaching, training and learning activities. In small groups, they will have the opportunity to fill a SWOT analysis for a specific situation where the use of technologies brings an added value to the training actions.
METHODS	<i>Brainstorming session between the learners and small group discussion.</i>
TIME ALLOCATED	70 minutes.
RESOURCES NEEDED	<a href="#"><u>Jamboard</u></a> <a href="#"><u>Mentimeter</u></a>
ACTIVITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#"><u>Input sessions Chapters 1 and 3</u></a> (10-15 min.)</li> <li>• Brainstorming session: personal difficulties when doing e-social work and strategies to overcome them and creation of a world cloud on Mentimeter. (20-25 min.)</li> <li>• SWOT analysis discussion of case scenarios (Jamboards). (20-25 min.)</li> </ul>
HANDOUTS	Appendix 1

### INSTRUCTIONS:

#### Exercise 1 - Brainstorming:

The session will start with a brainstorming about the main challenges and difficulties that the learners have found when trying to work online with their clients during their professional development. Each person will list one real difficulty they have encountered, thus having a total of around 10 challenging situations. If one or more participants have never worked

digitally, they will be asked to think about possible difficulties that they imagine might arise. After each participant has voiced their thoughts in turn, the trainer asks them to keep them in mind and explains that they are going to create a digital document in which all challenges will be written down. The aim is the learners to see how Mentimeter works both as an organiser and as a participant and understand its functionality. The facilitator will share his/her screen and create a word cloud using Mentimeter, so that participants can see step by step how to produce it. Once the word cloud has been created, the trainer shares the compiling link with the learners, who will connect individually to insert the challenge previously shared into the brainstorming.

Subsequently, participants will focus on the strategy that they think that could be used to overcome those obstacles. The trainer will use a new word cloud on Mentimeter and each person will have to write a strategy to overcome the written difficulty. The facilitator will comment on each of the word clouds created on the most frequently chosen words with stimulus questions such as *"Why this word has emerged several times? What does it mean for us? How can it be translated into practice?"*.

## **Exercise 2 - SWOT analysis discussion of case scenarios**

Building on what emerged in the group, participants are divided into 3 subgroups, in different break out rooms. The facilitator shares with each group a link of Jamboard with one of the three scenarios written (provided as Appendix 1) and a SWOT analysis matrix and explain how to use it.

Note: the trainer should create 3 different Jamboard links in advance of the session, each with 1 scenario and 1 SWOT matrix.

Each group should work on its SWOT analysis, considering the scenario that was given to that group, filling the 4 topics: Strengths; Weaknesses; Opportunities; Threats. Groups will have 20 min to fill the SWOT exercise. Then, participants will come back to the main room (Zoom) and a representative of each group will present the results of the group. The facilitator should promote a discussion focusing on the importance and the benefits of introducing ICT resources in teaching, training and learning activities.

Note:

- If the facilitator decides to deliver the activity before presenting the contents of Chapter 3, this activity works as an introduction, so the discussion should be conducted to the content of the module (10min).
- if the facilitator decides to deliver the activity after presenting the content, the discussion of this activity can be focused on making a brief summary of the main topics mentioned on the module.

## **APPENDIX 1**

**Scenario 1:** I will deliver a training action, but I know, by anticipation, that a potential participant has physical limitations, because he uses a wheelchair. I was informed that I can decide to have the training in online, b-learning or face-to-face format. I was also informed that this person has a computer and internet connection at home, and some digital skills. What would be the benefit and constraints in introducing ICT resources, in this case?

**Scenario 2:** I work in an organization which offers group assistance to informal caregivers of elderly people. I know that they have limitations in terms of time and dislocations, due to their role as informal carers, when they do not have anyone else who can take care of the person. What would change if I had the possibility to give them assistance through an online format, taking advantage of ICT devices/resources?

**Scenario 3:** I was going to deliver a face-to-face training in next month, but due to the COVID-19 restrictions, I already know that I will need to adapt it to an online format, or I will not be able to deliver it. What would be the benefit and constraints in introducing ICT resources, in this case?

## Session 2- SOCIAL WORK AND TECHNOLOGIES

OBJECTIVE(S)	Aim of this session is to help participants reflect on the ethical issues which can be connected with digital social work
METHODS	<b>Group discussion with the Gallery Group Method:</b> In the gallery group discussion exercise, participants work in smaller groups and discuss issues related to a certain topic or subject
TIME ALLOCATED	25 minutes
RESOURCES NEEDED	Three Jam-Boards (or similar tool) with the following titles: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. List ethical issues related with ICT and professional boundaries and personal discretion</li> <li>2. List ethical issues related with ICT and confidentiality of data</li> <li>3. List ethical issues related with digital divide</li> </ol> A web-conferencing tool allowing to divide participants in groups
ACTIVITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Input sessions Chapter 2</a> (5-7 min.)</li> <li>• Group discussion with the Gallery Group Method (20 min)</li> </ul>



	<p>Tips:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask each group to use a different colour when writing on the board to help separate their contribution to each of them</li> <li>• During the exercise, facilitators should move to each room to provide clarifications and encourage discussion if needed</li> </ul>
REFERENCES	<a href="#">Gallery Group Discussion Exercise   Training Workshops (ventureteambuilding.co.uk)</a>
HANDOUTS	None

### Exercise 3: Group discussion with the Gallery Group Method

In the gallery group discussion exercise, participants work in smaller groups and discuss issues related to a certain topic or subject. Each room has a virtual board, such as a JamBoard (aka, the 'gallery'). Each group is allocated a Board to begin, they then discuss the topic and write down their conclusions on the board paper before moving on to the other ones.

At the end of the exercise, groups present the information back and participants are given some time to tour the galleries to see what the other groups have contributed.

Prepare three boards, each board should have one of the following questions:

1. List ethical issues related with ICT and professional boundaries and personal discretion
2. List ethical issues related with ICT and confidentiality of data
3. List ethical issues related with digital divide

Divide participants into 3 groups. Select a person from each group to document the groups discussion and conclusions on the flipchart paper. Ask each group to write with a different colour to help separate their contribution to each board.

Begin the exercise and give each group 15 minutes to discuss the topic, i.e. five minutes per gallery list.

Next, move each group on to next gallery and have them discuss the new topic and add their contribution. Continue this for each subsequent gallery.

Once all groups have contributed to each flipchart, get them to return to where they started and allow time to review and discuss the contributions added by the other groups.

Each group will now present their gallery piece and their findings to the other groups.

## Session 3 – Digital resources

OBJECTIVE(S)	<p>The learning objectives for this session relates to the use of selected digital media/social media, introducing exercises targeting guidance using the search function on Facebook and Youtube for specific topics, as well as understanding how professionals could teach their users to perform such activities. Facebook and Youtube are the two top platforms used by older adults, according to a 2018 study.</p> <p>The exercises are meant to raise awareness and train how to guide the end user to access a wide range of topics offered by digital media/social media. The specific objective is therefore to try to teach a potential customer how to make research on these social networks, without neglecting the clarification of words in the platform's <i>slang</i>. By the end of the exercise, the participant will have understood how it is necessary to describe each step to allow a client to enjoy the functions of these social networks.</p>
METHODS	Group work and guided discussion
TIME ALLOCATED	20 minutes
RESOURCES NEEDED	<p>All participants should have an e-mail account and a Facebook account</p> <p>All participants should have access to a tablet or laptop/PC with internet connection</p>
ACTIVITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Input sessions</i> Chapter 4 (5-7 min.)</li> <li>• Group work on how to guide user on using social network (20 min)</li> </ul>
HANDOUTS	Annex 3

### Exercise 4: Group work on how to guide user on using social network

The facilitator shortly introduces the participants to the exercises in plenary. For the introduction a short PPT or a PDF with the instructions is useful. Simple exercise steps can also be introduced in the Zoom chat, for easy viewing during the exercise. After the short introduction, the participants are split into smaller groups break out rooms (Zoom) to work on the exercises, continuously sharing their experiences. The exercises end with a summary in plenary, presenting key experiences. The exercises are meant to raise awareness and train how to guide the end user to access a wide range of topics offered by digital media/social media.

As the exercises target the *guiding* role of the facilitator, all participants will in fact take part in the exercises as facilitators, paying special attention to the applicability for the end user of the various steps of the exercises.

Summary:

- Facilitator shortly introduces participants to the exercises in plenary (PPT/PDF)
- The participants are split into smaller groups in Teams/Zoom (group rooms/break out rooms)
- The smaller groups work collaboratively on the exercises and continuously share their experiences with each other
- At the end of the session participants return in plenary, shortly summarizing key experiences from each group

## ANNEX 3

### Instruction group 1:

- Open your Facebook account
- Look for the search icon (magnifying glass) usually in the top menu bar
- Enter your search topic in the search box; *e.g. your user wants to search for a group on the topic "dementia"* and click the magnifying glass or the "Enter" tab on your



Tip: the more specific your search topic, the more specific search results

- Now a list of search results is displayed, typically listing pictures and video links at the top
- In the left side of the screen you will see a "filter" menu – clicking on of the filters will narrow your search corresponding to the filter chosen.
- E.g. try clicking "Persons" or "Groups", you will now get a variety of search results referring to persons or groups, sharing your topic interest – Facebook usually displays search results containing or close to your area/zip code, if known
- You can narrow the search even more by clicking sub filters in the filter chosen, e.g. "City" or "Public groups" in the "Groups" filter
- Click the search result you wish to enter to know more about the topic or the persons or groups sharing the topic interest
- Not all groups are public, private groups usually requires membership of the group to view topic content

Now reflect together on this issue:

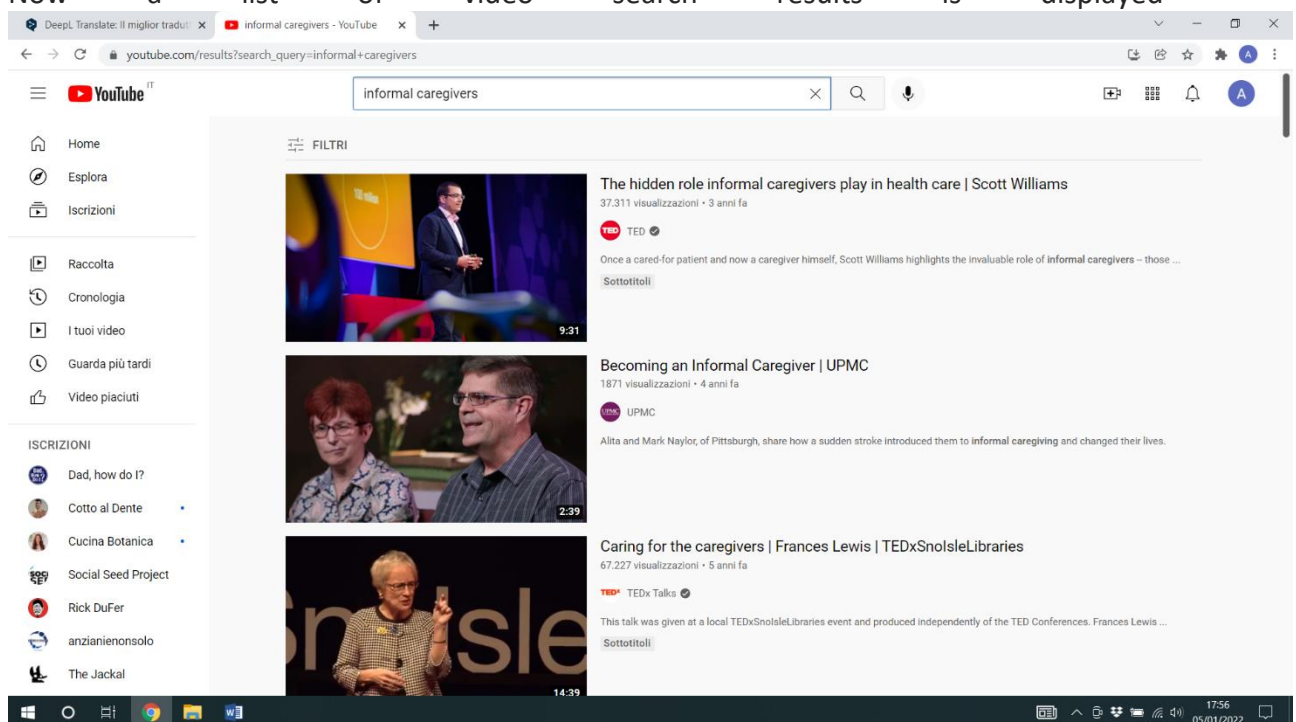
How would you explain to one of your users how to carry out this research?

Modify or enrich the description considering the possibility that the user may not know the slang of this social network (explain any potentially unfamiliar words/concepts/functions).

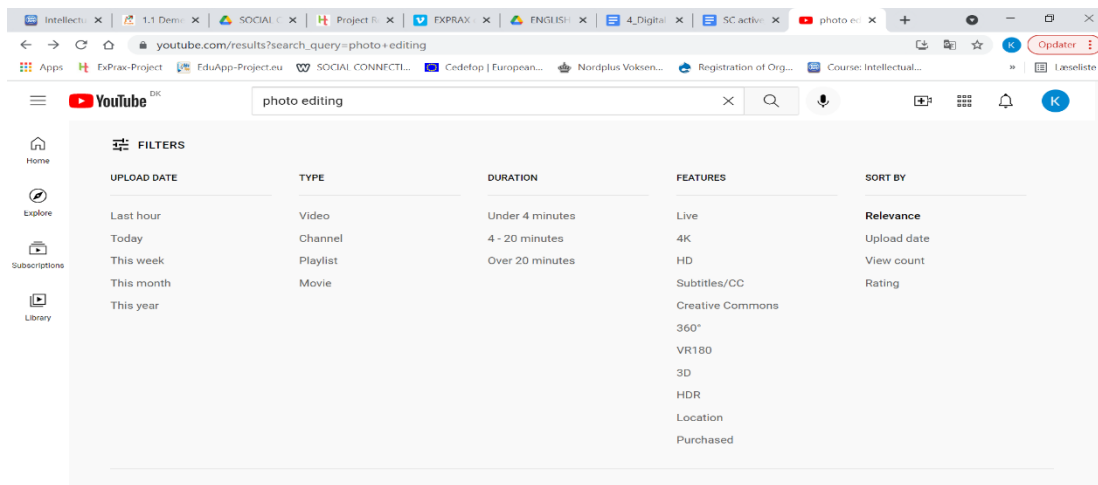
When finished with the exercises, return to the plenary room for summarizing key experiences in plenary.

## Instruction group 2:

- Open Youtube.com
- At the top a search box is displayed
- Enter your search topic; e.g. *“informal caregivers”* in the search box and click the magnifying glass or the “Enter” tab on your device
- Now a list of video search results is displayed



- Please note that results marked with the label “Ad” are advertised results, usually promoting a specific product or a company
- At the top left side of the screen a search filter option is displayed, offering you a wide range of filter options



- Click the search result of your choice to open/start the video tutorial – please note that Youtube sometimes displays commercials when you open videos – in that case, wait for a few seconds and click “Skip Ads” displayed at the right side of the video.
- **Tip:** If you later wish to find a specific video tutorial you watched, click on “Library” in the left menu bar on the screen – your latest watched videos are displayed here (requires you have allowed cookies)

Now reflect together on this issue:

How would you explain to one of your users how to carry out this research?

Modify or enrich the description considering the possibility that the user may not know the slang of this social network (explain any potentially unfamiliar words/concepts/functions).

When finished with the exercises, return to the plenary room for summarizing key experiences in plenary.

## Session 4 - COMMUNICATION IN DIGITAL SPACES and EMPOWERING LEARNERS

OBJECTIVE(S)	<p>Aim of this session is to help participants applying in practice the criteria that should guide the selection of digital tools for social work activities, in relation to accessibility and usability of those tools.</p> <p>The exercises target the trainers' reflections on how to access webpages and use different devices/hardware if the end user has disabilities/impairments, e.g. declining hearing, physical ability and intellectual disability.</p>
METHODS	<b>Case-based learning (CBL)</b> is an approach where students apply their knowledge to real-world scenarios
TIME ALLOCATED	35 minutes
RESOURCES NEEDED	<p>Three case scenarios (see hand-outs)</p> <p>A video-conferencing tool allowing to separate participants into smaller rooms</p>
ACTIVITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Input sessions Chapter 5 and 6</a> (10-15 min.)</li> <li>• Group work on case study (25 min)</li> </ul>
HANDOUTS	Annex 4

### Exercise 5: Group work on case study

Divide your participants in three smaller groups and provide a case to each group. Allow each group 15 minutes to discuss the case and choosing the best tool(s) for their intervention according to the information and criteria provided in the module. At the end of the 15 minutes, discuss results in plenary: what do the others think about the decision taken by the presenting group? Do they agree or would they have done something different? Why?

### ANNEX 4

#### CASE NR. 1 – ONLINE PEER SUPPORT GROUP

You have been requested by a small NGO to set up an online peer support group for pregnant women suffering of multiple-sclerosis. The disease causes them reduced dexterity, making it difficult to use a mouse and hit small targets on the screen. Participants are expected to be between 6 and 10 women aged 25 to 40 based in different parts of the Region. You don't have



information about their level of digital literacy but you know that they will most likely connect from home using their mobile phones. The NGO promoting this programme has a very limited budget.

Which digital tool(s) would you recommend to use and why, considering:

- The aim of the intervention
- The target group
- The context
- The devices used

Is there any other information you would need to get to be able to take a decision re. the tool(s) to be adopted? If yes, please list them.

As a trainer, what reflections do you make in relation to creating a good user experience for a person with reduced dexterity?

## **CASE NR. 2 – INDIVIDUAL CONSULTATION**

You have a client named Magda, she is 75 and has declining hearing, making it difficult to hear mumbling speech – especially when there is background noise. She is the informal carer of her husband suffering of multiple health issues including severe dementia and prostatic cancer. You think that Magda might be in severe burn-out and you invite her for a consultation with you but she said she can't come in person as she can't leave her husband alone. Since you can't go for a home-visit, you decide to propose her a video-call.

Which digital tool(s) would you recommend to use and why, considering:

- The aim of the intervention
- The persons involved
- The context
- The device used

Is there any other information you would need to get to be able to take a decision re. the tool(s) to be adopted? If yes, please list them.

As a trainer, what reflections do you make in relation to creating a good user experience for a person with impaired hearing?

## **CASE NR.3 – PERFORMING ART WORKSHOP**

You have been asked by a local municipality to run an online performing arts workshop with 7 teen-agers with mild intellectual disabilities. You will work together with another colleague. The plan is to allow participants to experiment different techniques including drama, singing and dancing. You know that all your participants will connect from a lap-top with a webcam and a microphone. You would like to record their performances to make a video that they can show to their families.

Which digital tool(s) would you recommend to use and why, considering:



- The aim of the intervention
- The persons involved
- The context
- The device used

Is there any other information you would need to get to be able to take a decision re. the tool(s) to be adopted? If yes, please list them.

As a trainer, what reflections do you make in relation to creating a good user experience for a person with intellectual disabilities?

## Session 5 - Facilitating learners' digital competences

OBJECTIVE(S)	This session has been designed as a learning complement to the chapter "Facilitating learners' digital competences", and, therefore, it aims to help consolidate the trainers' awareness about how to resort to digital means and skills to better deliver the intended content and knowledge to his/her learners, and to foster the reflection on the importance of developing these competencies and skills. In particular, this activity focuses on the European Framework for the Digital Competence of Educators (DigCompEdu). The educators will use this framework to more efficiently assess their digital readiness, which will serve as a starting point for a discussion on how eventual gaps can be overcome, and which are the best tools to do so. Through this debate, trainers will also explore some useful digital learning and teaching tools, which is another topic addressed in the Chapter 7.
METHODS	The activity will, at first, be implemented as a brainstorming session. Then, the trainers will be presented with a set of questions that will guide the discussion.
TIME ALLOCATED	25 min.
RESOURCES NEEDED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Zoom Account (this will be the platform used to gather all participants and where the discussion will take place. The trainers will be divided into groups (using Zoom's break-out rooms functionality)</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>DigComEdu</i> document (in <a href="#">English</a>; in <a href="#">Portuguese</a>; in <a href="#">Italian</a>; in <a href="#">Spanish</a>; in <a href="#">Romanian</a>*). This document will serve as the basis for the discussion.</li> </ul> <p><i>* DigComEdu is not yet translated into Danish. However, in case of any doubt, the main Digital Competences can be consulted in Danish <a href="#">here</a>, in The Digital Competence wheel.</i></p>
ACTIVITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Input sessions Chapter 7</a> (5-7 min.)</li> <li>• Group work on DigCompEdu (25 min)</li> </ul>
REFERENCES	<p><i>DigCompEdu:</i> <a href="https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC107466">https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC107466</a></p>
HANDOUTS	Annex 5

### Exercise 6: Group work on DigCompEdu

The facilitator shares the DigCompEdu with the participants (if they don't have it yet) and explain the focus of the activity. Participants should be divided into two groups. Each one of these groups will focus on one of the Digital Competences Areas:

- Digital Resources (Area 2) and
- Teaching and Learning (Area 3).

They should resort to the document in order to clarify any doubts they may have about the specific skills connected to the competences listed. They should discuss with their colleagues, using the questions provided as a reference. The discussion can take up to 15 minutes. The participants should come back to the main room and share the conclusions and reflections with the other group and the facilitator.

### ANNEX 5

Look at the competences listed as crucial within the context of the Educators Digital Competences' Area assigned to you (either Area 2 or Area 3).

#### Area 2

- What are your major difficulties/gaps? Do you feel comfortable selecting digital resources, creating and modifying them, as well as managing them, sharing and protecting them?
- Make a list of your major difficulties within each one of the competences mentioned.
- From the examples provided to you in the Chapter, choose a digital tool that you think would be useful to implement at your work with learners, reflect on how you would adapt it to their needs, and how you could use it safely.



### Area 3

- Make a list of your major difficulties within each one of the competences mentioned.
- From the examples provided to you in the Chapter, choose a digital tool that you think would be adequate to enhance the interaction with learners, individually and collectively, within and outside the learning session.
- From the examples provided to you in the Chapter, choose a digital tool that you think could be useful to promote collaboration between learners.
- Finally, select also an example of a digital technology that could help support learners' self-regulated learning.

## Session 6 – Digital feedbacks

OBJECTIVE(S)	Aim of this session is to increase students' knowledge of how to offer effective feedback online, understanding how to give positive and constructive digital feedback.
METHODS	Group work and brainstorming. These techniques are useful to develop the possibility of finding a solution to a proposed problem. Its meaning is to use the brain to storm a problem. Each brainstorming participant proposes a resolution without thinking about the bizarreness of the criticism is part of a second stage.
TIME ALLOCATED	25 minutes
RESOURCES NEEDED	Two pages of a Miro (or similar tool) with some basic elements to create a positive feedback. A web-conferencing tool allowing to divide participants in groups
INSTRUCTIONS*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Input sessions Chapter 7</a> (5-7 min.)</li> <li>• Group work on giving feedbacks to learners (25 min)</li> </ul>
HANDOUTS	None

### Exercise 7: Group work on giving feedbacks to learners

Brainstorming is an exercise that allows participants to express their ideas freely, without specific constraints dictated by the facilitator, other than a theme around which the "problem" to be solved revolves. In this exercise, the argumentative input will be some basic elements describing the performance of a potential student.

The participants are divided into 2 working groups. All of them will have the same task, which is to formulate a feedback from the elements written on the digital board (see below). Each group will then have to elaborate a positive and constructive feedback for the potential learner, following the principles mentioned in the previous theoretical part. They will have totally 20 minutes for this task.

The information entered on each Miro provided to participants will be:

- the learner is a social worker with a lot of experience in the field, but almost no experience in the use of digital tools
- the learner is motivated, and tried the digital tool (e.g. Zoom) for the first time
- the learner has not exploited the full potential of the digital tool available (e.g. in Zoom it could be represented by the use of screen sharing, rooms, session recording, virtual background)
- you worry that the learner has not understood some functionality of the digital tool (e.g. the microphone remained switched on causing background noise, the camera was switched off in all the duration of the activity)
- despite some obstacles in using this tool, the intervention through the digital platform was effective and achieved its objectives

Each participant in the group will have to develop feedback to be returned to the potential learner, following the principles listed in the induction session. It should be noted on the Miro, so that the other group members can see it. Once all the feedbacks have been written down, a brainstorming session will be opened among the members about the effectiveness of each of the feedback and how they could be improved or changed. Participants, in the last 5 minutes of the group session, should choose the "best" feedback they have written down and record it vocally on [Online Voice Recorder](#).

Once recorded the feedback orally, SWTs will return to the plenary and have a final discussion together on what has been done in the group, how complex the formulation of the inputs was and whether they had difficulties in recording the message orally.

Tips:

During the exercise, facilitators should move to each room to provide clarifications and encourage discussion if needed



## PART 2 - PRACTICAL TOOLS AND METHODS TO IMPLEMENT E-SOCIAL WORK PROGRAMMES



## Digital black out poetry

**What it is:** Black-out poetry (or found poetry) which can also be a form a visual poetry, is when you take an existing text and rearrange it, highlight it, cut it out, or in some other way alter it to make an original poem. It can be defined as the literary equivalent of a collage. By making poetry a full sensory experience, the genre becomes more accessible to people with disabilities or impairments that might otherwise preclude them from engaging in poetry and writing workshops. This creative technique, not requiring specific instruments or tools to be implemented, is suitable to be delivered through online workshops.

### Training module: Digital black-out poetry (Duration: 4 hours)

**Introduction/ Overview:** In this module we will introduce the methodology of the Digital Black-Out poetry as a tool to be incorporated in digital social work activities with individuals and groups.

We will understand what is black out poetry and where it comes from, we will explore its use in a socio-pedagogical context, we will understand how it can be performed online and finally we will provide suggestions for its use with different target groups.

#### Learning objectives:

1. Understanding what is the Black-Out Poetry
2. Understanding how it can be use in the context of social work
3. Being able to perform it online
4. Being able to adapt the technique to different target groups and settings

**Theoretical and contextual background:** Blackout Poetry is the name of any sort of poem that is derived from blacking out any unwanted words from any written text (paragraph, book, sign, article etc.)

Blackout Poetry is based all around Found Poetry. Found Poetry is the art form of picking and choosing existing words that resonate with the artist's vision. For example, Found Poetry can be done by cutting words out of books or magazines and sticking them together, similar to a collage. Blackout Poetry is incredibly similar in style, but rather than cutting from all different sorts of literature, blackout poetry focuses instead on what can be created from a single page of text.

Artistic concepts as that of Blackout poetry date back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, however in modern times it was popularized by the American writer Austin Kleon, who started to pick words from a daily newspaper and to black out with a marker all the others, creating new poetic compositions.

The purpose of Blackout Poetry is to draw a new meaning from something existing and developed with a different reason and purpose. Many blackout poets try to derive almost an opposite meaning from their starting block of text, using words to string together a new story from the initial one given. Blackout poetry is a creative method of deep personal exploration through a process of creation (or unveiling) of a visual and poetical message.

For this reason, while Blackout poetry can be considered an artistic form, it can also be applied in the context of interventions aimed to involve individuals or groups in a process of self-expression, self-reflection, empowerment and sharing of feelings and thoughts based on creative methods.

Indeed, in a psycho-social context, it can be highlighted the process of taking the words from someone else and transform them into what the user wants them to say. It's a form of taking back power. The user can choose the words, the meaning, the end result. It's liberating and empowering to take back control, even in a small way, and see that they can create something beautiful or meaningful from someone else's thoughts/actions.

Moreover, the process of creating a Blackout poem often helps users to speak through someone else's words the truths he can't say to himself yet. It acts as an expressive medium overcoming the barrier of starting from scratch.

Blackout poetry can also be a way to help starting a discussion on a topic which might be heavy to address directly and support self-awareness about own actions, behaviours or feelings.

A session based on Blackout Poetry can be implement *per se* (for example as a mean of self-expression) or in the context of a broader social intervention (for example the technique can be used to initiate a discussion around a topic in a group, or as a conclusive meeting to wrap up feelings and emotions elicited by a specific experience).

After poems have been created, there can be a feedback session, where participants can be invited by the facilitator to share and comment their results with the rest of the group.

Based on the purpose of the intervention, the facilitator can ask questions aimed to elicit the creative process (Why did you choose these words? What do they mean to you?), comment the result (What does the poem means to them in relation with the topic of the meeting?), compare their results with those of the rest of the group (Are there differences or similarities? Did anyone choose similar words but giving a different meaning to them?)

### **Description of the method/ approach/ strategy:**

The typical process for the creation of a Blackout Poem is the following:

1. Choose a text, from any kind of different document. The text can be chosen by the facilitator, for example using a text related with the topic of the group or the intervention, or by participants, who can be encouraged to choose one which is meaningful to them.
2. Ask participants to go through the text without worrying about the meaning of the words or the narrative in the page. Encourage them to note those words that 'call them' and just underline or circle them. 5-10 words are more than enough.
3. Now participants should be asked to try to put the words together in a meaningful sentence, a poetic composition. They can readjust it with connective words if needed or change the order in which they are on the page. When they have decided which words to keep and defined a first draft of the poem, they can cover the rest of the text on the page ('blacking it out')
4. Finally, it's time for the art! The document can be left as it is or decorated.

In order to perform the same activity digitally, there are three main options:

1. Using a dedicated APP, such as Blackout Bard, available for [Android](#) as well as for [IOs](#) – The APP can be very helpful as it facilitates the whole process and allows to get nicely designed outputs effortless. However, it should be noted that it is available in English only and requires quite advanced ICT skills.
0. Using a Google Doc. In this case the procedure to be followed is:
  - Copy the text without formatting in a new document
  - Adjust the fonts, text and page size to fit a poem
  - Go to File > Page Set Up and choose a color other than black or white for the page background
  - Take the highlighter and choose the white highlight, highlight the words you want to keep
  - Change the page background to black. In this way only the highlighted words will remain
0. Using a Google Presentation. In this case the procedure to be followed is:
  - Copy the text without formatting in a new document
  - Adjust the fonts, text and page size to cover the entire slide
  - Go to Slide > Change Background and choose a color other than black or white for the page background
  - Take the highlighter and choose the white highlight, highlight the words you want to keep
  - Change the page background to black. In this way only the highlighted words will remain
  - You can now decorate the slide, for example adding connection lines between words, or including pictures (if you look for images online, make sure that you include PNG to the key-word – for example “Wolf PNG” – to make sure that you get images with transparent background).

Options two and three might be easier for a public which is less ICT-literate. For example, the facilitator can prepare in advance the basic document (text and coloured background), share the access link via chat with each user, let him/her highlight the words chosen and finally the facilitator can enter again to turn the background to black.

### Lesson plan:

#### Part 1 – What is Blackout Poetry

- Introduction: ask to the class if they think you can express something meaningful and poetic in few words. After a short discussion you can share with them some Haikus, which are a traditional short form of Japanese poetry. (You can find some for example [in this website](#)).
- Then you can ask whether they think that anyone can write short poems like these? Have a short discussion on why yes and why no.
- Then introduce the concept of Blackout Poetry using the theoretical contents provided above (the first four paragraphs) as well as some examples of Blackout Poetry (you can find many on Instagram, for example)
- You can also show them this [Ted Talk](#) (several subtitles available) where Austin Kleon talks about his work and how he had the idea of developing this method.

## Part 2 – Why using it in a social work intervention

- After this introduction to the method, involve the class in a brainstorming exercise: “Why should we use this technique in the context of a social work intervention?”
- Collect all comments on a Jamboard (or similar) and, if necessary, integrate with the information provided in the theoretical introduction (paragraphs 6 to 8).

## Part 3 – How to use it online

- Share your screen and show participants step by step how they can create a digital Blackout Poem both using the APP as well as using the GSuite tools.
- Now ask each participant to try to apply one of the methods and to create its own Blackout Poem. Allow at least 30 minutes for this task, which should be performed individually.
- When back in plenary, ask participants to share their poem (if they wish to do so) and/or their experience about the process. Try to elicit any issues they had from a digital point of view as well as how they felt performing the process. Was it easy? Was it difficult? Why?

## Part 4 – Adapting to different groups and settings

1. Now that each participant had the chance to experience the technique, invite them to reflect on how they would apply it with their target groups. Divide participants in small groups (3-4 persons) using breakout rooms and ask them to discuss the following points:

- Which kind of goals would they set for your audience?
- How would they introduce the activity to their audience? What kind of instructions / recommendations would they give them?
- How would they choose the texts to be used?
- Which digital options they would use and how?
- How would they conduct the workshop?
- How would they conduct the feedback session?
- What kind of opportunities and risks they see in using this method?

2. Allow them 30 to 45 minutes and then go back in plenary to share and discuss results of the group work.

## Challenges and tips for implementation in different classrooms contexts:

The structure of the workshop can be adapted according to:

- Size of the group (if the group is large, working groups and discussions will take more time)
- ICT literacy of the group (if the group has limited ICT skills, it might be necessary to allow more time in explaining how to implement the procedures from a digital point of view and providing more one-to-one guidance)

- Educational / professional focus of the group: if the group is homogeneous and working with the same target group (i.e. disability, old-age, youth, addiction...) you might adapt the lessons more precisely to the needs of this target group. For example, part 4 might be facilitated providing each group with a specific scenario to be discussed.

**Supporting material for practicing/understanding/implementing the method (exercises, case studies, videos, interactive resources):**

Ted Talk "Steal Like An Artist: Austin Kleon" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oww7oB9rjgw>

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**Self-assessment activity:**

Please rate the extent to which you feel you can perform with confidence the following tasks (1 = minimum confidence – 5 = maximum confidence)

	1	2	3	4	5
Introduce Blackout Poetry to a group of users					
Set psycho-social goals to be achieved through a Blackout Poetry session					
Deliver a Blackout Poetry session online					
Support users in creating their own Blackout poem online					
Adapt the Blackout Poetry technique to a specific audience					

If you rate any of the items 3 or below, please go back to your trainer and ask for more clarifications or support.

## Game-based learning

**What it is:** Gamification makes the learning experience of the adult as intense and relevant. Allowing for competitiveness and desire for mastery, gamification translates existing skill based tasks into play – it invites the adult to immerse in a play, and then allows for a better sense making of the context through a narrative tutorial. The Human-Computer or Human-Mobile interaction is ‘safe’ because the associated feelings of ‘shame’, ‘failure’ and ‘shyness’ that accompany any learning are not relevant in this mode. Most adults are extremely conscious of making mistakes in a classroom and thus set up defences and facades to shield their lack of knowing. Gamification allows a sense of intimacy and privacy where the adult can do away with such concerns and make mistakes (Singh, 2019). Nowadays, gamification in learning is supported by a variety of online tools that allows trainers lacking advanced coding or programming skills to develop digital games which can help for example acquiring healthier life habits or improve memory or other cognitive skills.

### Training module: game-based learning (Duration: 4 hours)

**Introduction/ Overview:** Game-based learning is a form of learning based on games with the use of technology. Although video gaming has been associated with many negative health consequences, it may also be useful for therapeutic purposes (Primack et al., 2012). Game-based learning presupposes the achievement of the goals of learning through various forms of provoking the brain to active and effective work based on the elements of entertainment. Through the last years, game-based learning has grown in popularity and is considered as a potentially motivating and rewarding, as well as innovative and more interactive, form of learning (Rooney and Whitton, 2016).

It has been applied in a number of different areas, among which are the sectors of health, well-being, and social inclusion (Farrel et al., 2011). Practices used in games to motivate participants to participate regularly are, among other things, related to the provision of rewards, the task of which is to provoke specific actions and decisions based on the principle of being beneficial to society and individuals (Vanalo, 2018). Additionally, the game usually does not require any particular knowledge, which allows for a greater variety of participants. The literature shows that the practices based on games and digital games are widely used in spatial planning and urban design for a variety of reasons. This way, it can be a perfect tool to fight against social exclusion in a digital way, for example, by remotely mirroring real spaces, cities or neighborhoods, places where vulnerable people can participate in social life in the same way, as they would do in the real world.

#### Learning objectives:

1. Understanding what game-based learning is.
2. Understanding how game-based learning can be used by social workers working with vulnerable population.
3. Isolating specific forms and types of digital games based on the individual needs of different clients' groups.



4. Preparing for possible difficulties in the practical application of the tool and identifying specific methods to overcome these difficulties.

### **Theoretical and contextual background:**

Games are a ludic category corresponding to all periods of human life except early childhood. In people's consciousness, the terms game, fun or competition are associated with a pleasant way of spending time. They are a form of entertainment that opposes compulsory learning. By introducing didactic games, learning can be made more interesting. Learning through play triggers curiosity and cognitive interests, arouses motivation to perform tasks and influences the development of creative cognitive attitudes. A variety of tasks and exercises in the form of games can become a source of success and desired results.

In the social sciences, didactic games, based on activities leading to the achievement of set goals while respecting accepted norms, have great developmental value. They help improve various mental skills: perceptiveness, attention, memory, visual and auditory analysis and synthesis, comparison, classification and generalization. They therefore provide opportunities for logical thinking. They develop such character traits as consistency, perseverance, self-discipline and a sense of justice. They develop both the ability to undertake tasks independently and to co-operate in a group.

Game Based Learning (GBL) is used to encourage students to participate in learning through play by diversifying the learning process with the fun aspect. This has a positive impact on cognitive development. Games and courses are combined because traditional learning is increasingly perceived as boring and game-based learning can increase the motivation to learn. Mobile learning technology can enhance students' learning achievement, motivation and attitudes. In the digital game-based learning contexts, it is easier for students to understand the crucial concepts of the subjects, feel much happier and more interested in learning (C-Y. Chang and G-J. Hwang, 2019).

In addition to the classic structural elements of games, such as the idea or plot, the rules of the game, the elements of suspense and challenge and the location of the action, additional characteristics of games used in GBL are the digital medium and the didactic concept. Underlying these features is a reflection on how learning can be associated with positive feelings. By combining the previously separate spheres of play, learning and work, they aim to facilitate informal learning processes. For game-based learning, the social element is an important factor. Playing games together fulfils social needs for interaction that may arise from the desire for competition, companionship or recognition. The ability of individual players to cooperate is crucial for success in many computer games. In many online games, especially multiplayer games, cooperation and mutual assistance are necessary due to the game design. Didactic potentials of GBL are social and emotional learning, situated learning and exploratory learning.

Adapting computer games in social work practice is a part of the digitalization process - a socio-technical process, in which large-scale digitization techniques are applied and adopted in social and institutional contexts. As the discipline-profession's main objective is based on functions related to **socialization**, such as social care with users and the facilitation and creation of relationships between people (Addams, 1902), in the context of remote practice of social worker these values

should be fulfilled. Game-based learning can be at the same time a great way for social work students to gain practical experience before undertaking professional practice. Nowadays we live in a time where technical knowledge along with scientific competence is vital for the future, the students are dealing with uneven quality of education. In most cases, students just spend their time listening to lectures and memorizing facts which eventually makes them lose interest. On the other hand, in some cases, experts are calling for a different approach to education. They demand **a more practical approach** which demands students to be part of investigations to gain knowledge. It further expresses how computer games and simulations can improve the learning experience by offering interactions with potential work environment. This phenomenon can offer motivational challenges to students as well as help create new material for specific needs and interests.

#### **Description of the method/ approach/ strategy:**

Game-based learning is based on many techniques and forms of gaining knowledge and practical experience. One of them is simulation-based education. Studies show that simulation games utilize real life skills, talents and activities in a simulated world. This experience validated the important role that video games provide to the users mentally and physically. Through these games, people can become more confident in their decisions and skills, for example concentration, critical thinking, learning and discovery or quicker decision making. Different kind of social and personal abilities can be developed by the use of video games. For example, by playing games focused on music, dance, or fitness, that through a simulated performance get a person moving, individual physical conditions can be improved. Some of these games can be done individually or in a group, but they focus on movements, sequence, improving skills such as hand and eye coordination, synchronization, teamwork and motivation, as well as give a user a chance to practice healthy workout. Examples of this kind of games: Wii sports, Dance dance revolution, Eyetoy: Final Furlong (PS2) or Your Shape Fitness Evolve (Edison, 2013).

Furthermore, researchers have used some popular video games as models to explain that non-learning entertainment-oriented games can be effective for learning activities given the right circumstances. There is emerging empirical research into the area of commercial video games as therapy, which is a contrary approach that instead of focusing on all the problems these games cause, proves a positive aspect that can be also driven this way. The research focused on the impact of unmodified commercial games as health interventions provide some early evidence of positive outcomes in a variety of health areas: physical activity, cognitive status in elderly, anxiety, depression, posttraumatic stress disorder, improvement of positive symptoms in schizophrenia, intrusive memories from trauma, improving social skills among autistic people. Games that have been proved to influence this health improvement are among others Minecraft, "Animal Crossing: New horizons", "Mario Kart", "Plants vs. Zombies" (Sweet, 2021), "Angry birds", "Farmville", "World of Warcraft" (Bowen, 2014), "Tetris", "SIMS 3", "Call of duty", "Super Mario" or "Bejeweled Blitz" (Pallavicini, 2018).

Findings give evidences of benefits of video games training on cognitive and emotional skills in relation to the healthy adult population, especially on young adults. Efficacy has been demonstrated not only for non-commercial video games or commercial brain-training programs, but for commercial video games as well (Pallavicini, F., 2018).

The analysis of several studies, indicates that the use of active video games with a frequency of 1 to 3 times a week with durations of between 10 and 90 min per day shows positive effects on mental health and physical functioning. There was moderate quality evidence that active video games can result in benefits for self-esteem, increased energy expenditure, physical activity and reduced body mass index in children and adolescents who used them in the home environment (Santos, IKD., 2021).

Scientists have not widely doubted the effectiveness of brain-training games in preventing Alzheimer's disease and dementia. By keeping the neural connections in your brain strong, games that challenge your working memory and mental agility can be an important part to prevent this kind of diseases (along with eating a nutrients-rich diet, getting plenty of sleep, and exercising multiple times per week). Some examples of these games can be Lumosity, Fit brains Trainer, Brain Trainer, Brain Metrix, Brain Fitness or Fit Brains Trainer (Huntsman, 2014).

Puzzle video games such as Tetris, characterized by low cognitive loads and generally short time demands, are capable of positive effects on the players' mood, generating positive emotions and relaxation (Pallavicini, F., 2018).

Video games such as Star Wars: Uprising (where players need to remember where to go back in the game to find the materials they need), The Sims, Pokemon Legends: Arceus or Animal crossing: New Horizons require organizational skills and can provide good practice for this skill (LW4K-EM, 2020).

What is more, there are gaming communities that unite around real-world problems in a therapeutic way. Gamers and gaming-related organizations directly and indirectly through charitable contributions provide social and psychological support, including peer support, online clinician-delivered services, information about mental health conditions, and assistance finding in-person mental health treatment to community members and the gaming population at large. For example, non-profit organizations, such as Stack-Up and Anxiety Gaming, provide spaces where gamers can learn about mental health problems, seek support and assistance, and interact socially either in person or online. This image of connected, socially engaged gamers challenges the stereotypical notion of video game play as an isolating and individual pastime that reinforces societal disconnectedness. Growing evidence suggests that online communities are, for specific types of players, socially liberating and contribute to improvements in self-esteem and control of emotions in real-world settings.

Due to isolation and social distance caused by COVID19 pandemic, having in mind the need of the general public to have an influence on the implementation of necessary changes and the development of society, digital forms of participatory planning and game-based learning have emerged thanks to technological developments. As game-based learning and digital engagement practices are widely used in urban planning and design, they have been used to create digital spaces where people without the possibility to leave their homes can satisfy their needs for social contact and community belonging. Game elements, based on digital technologies, have been implemented in cities to enable new and stimulating experiences in the urban space. One of the games developed in this context is W\_NDER: A Game for Times of Social Distancing. It is a two-player game, designed for two participants who want to get to know their urban surroundings by walking within 15 meters of each other and talking on the phone. One player is a Wanderer and the other is a Wonderworker. The Wanderer gives directions and answers openly and honestly to the questions asked by the

Wonderworker. In turn, the Miracle Worker interferes with the other player's questions and actions. This experience allows people to discover their surroundings from a different perspective and in a fun way.

### Interactive activities description in steps:

Use one of already existing digital games to test it in practise. After the activity, a group discussion should take place to make a comment on general feedback and feelings related to the game. At the end, the group can use one of the digital platforms, such as Miro/Mural/Conceptboard, coming up with ideas of games fulfilling their specific needs.

Game chosen as an activity:

1. **Minecraft:** Minecraft is a very well-known video game created in 2009 and widely used all over the world. In Minecraft, players explore a blocky 3D world with virtually infinite terrain, and may discover and extract raw materials, [craft](#) tools and items, and build structures, [earthworks](#) and simple machines. Depending on [game mode](#), players can fight computer-controlled [mobs](#), as well as cooperate with or compete against other players in the same world. Game modes include a [survival mode](#), in which players must acquire resources to build the world and maintain health, and a creative mode where players have unlimited resources. Players can [modify the game](#) to create new gameplay mechanics, items and assets.

0. The training participants should first get the game. They can play online from a PC; the first version of Minecraft is provided for free and there is no need to download it:

<https://classic.minecraft.net/?join=vyS90lkYrdKiXwR->

If you want your participants to download the game into their phones, they can download a trial version for free just entering Google play/App store.

0. The players can play collaboratively (multiplayer mode) or individually to survive into a virtual “world”. For a first introduction, your participants can try the individual mode to get use to the game and its rules. Then, they can play collaboratively to build a common world.

0. The trainer should explain the basis of the game as clearly as possible. Here you have some key instructions to create the world and to “survive” during the first hours:

- First of all, create a world by clicking on “create a new world”. Then, name this new world and play into the “survival” mode. Select “normal mode” to fix the difficulty level.
- Now an avatar appears in the screen; the players can configure this avatar as they prefer. The avatar has to survive into this world, so the player has to look for food, build a shelter, make tools, etc. The avatar has to look for raw materials to meet all these needs.

- Objective for the first session: to survive the first night into this new world. You can start chopping wood and stones just using your hands. You can use the chopped wood and stone to create materials to kill animals and get food. Go to the crafting table and create, for instance, a pick. As much raw materials you get, more different tools you are able to create into the crafting table, making easier to get more food, thus increasing the chances to survive.
- Now you can create a house. You need a shelter because at night monsters (mobs) appear and can kill your avatar, so safety is another important thing to consider. You can create, for instance, a simple cave with a door to be safe and thus be able to cook some meat inside, as it gives you more energy than raw meat.

0. After making sure every person understood the rules, the participants should begin the game. Time given for playing would be approximately 1 hour. That time should be enough for everybody to get familiar with the structure and functioning of the game.

Skills that can be trained using Minecraft: organizational skills, critical thinking, ability to focus on the important things (basic things like eating or safety), problem solving, learning motivation, collaboration and team-building when playing the multiplayer version, development of personal relationships or learn digital abilities. Self-esteem of the participants might also be increased, as they can see clear results of their work: buildings, farms, train stations or just survival another day! You can also try the “creative mode” to promote the creativity of your participants.

When using Minecraft as a learning tool, it is important to plan an objective for the participants, considering the learning objectives we want to achieve.

### **Challenges and tips for trainers for implementation in different classrooms contexts**

- Social workers have to have in mind physical and cognitive conditions of the client when choosing a game. It has to be appropriate to their abilities.
- Before proposing digital form of work, social workers should make sure if it is a possible option for a client; does the user have the access to the computer/tablet/smartphone? Is it an acceptable form of help for the client? Make sure that the client doesn't find this approach trivial or inappropriate in the context of his/her problems.

Before starting using a game with the client, the social worker should be prepared for eventual technical problems and lack of computer knowledge of the client, and be prepared to explain and instruct in everything necessary to run the game.

**Supporting material for practicing/understanding/implementing the method** (exercises, case studies, videos, interactive resources):

1. A link to enter the Minecraft game for free (PC version)  
<https://classic.minecraft.net/?join=vyS90lkYrdKiXwR->
2. Portal for designing and playing board games <https://tabletopia.com/about>



3. Slides containing information about different kind of games used in different contexts  
[https://mhanational.org/sites/default/files/Gaming%20For%20Mental%20Health%20MHA0420%20\(SLIDES\).pdf](https://mhanational.org/sites/default/files/Gaming%20For%20Mental%20Health%20MHA0420%20(SLIDES).pdf)
4. A video about the process of creating a digital game how to virtually experience and design a city <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NX6ga7BPPyA>
5. The digital platform rewarding sustainable actions and ideas <https://greenapes-site.netlify.app/en/>
6. A project of a game of an Italian interdisciplinary agency of research and design in the field of urban regeneration and social innovation  
[https://www.dynamoscopio.it/portfolio\\_page/gametrification-gioco-rigenerazione-urbana/](https://www.dynamoscopio.it/portfolio_page/gametrification-gioco-rigenerazione-urbana/)
7. A platform for digital interactive work <https://conceptboard.com/>
8. A platform to search video-games depending on the skill we want to work on:  
<https://learningworksforkids.com/playbooks/?s=&thinking=organization&academic=all&learning=all&age-min=any&age-max=any&tab=all&sortby=&sort=desc>

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### Self-assessment activity:

Please rate the extent to which you feel you can perform with confidence the following tasks (1 = minimum confidence – 5 = maximum confidence)

	1	2	3	4	5
Introduce game-based learning to a group of users					
Set psycho-social goals to be achieved through a session using game-based learning tools					
Deliver a session online based on game-based learning					
Choose the right digital game for different target groups					



Advise your clients about digital games that can used on their own to improve concrete skills					
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If you rate any of the items 3 or below, please go back to your trainer and ask for more clarifications or support.

## Digital art

**What it is:** using arts activities can help foster social empowerment, communicate the lived experience of participants to wider communities, developing creativity as a skill, i.e. the ability to think about a task or a problem in a new or different way, enabling to solve complex problems or find interesting ways to approach tasks.

### Training module: digital art workshop (Duration: 2 hours per session)

**Introduction/ Overview:** In this module we will introduce the use of the freeware sketching tool Sketchpad app <https://sketchpad.app/> as a tool to be incorporated in digital social work activities with individuals and groups.

The user will understand the basic functions of the sketching tool, we will explore its use in a socio-pedagogical virtual or hybrid context, finally we will provide suggestions for its use with different target groups.

A video tutorial is made for this workshop showing the written instructions below step by step as a visual guide on how to use Sketchpad – in this example to create a birthday invitation.

**Video tutorial:** <https://vimeo.com/708562202/97d0dc5295>

For most users a video tutorial will be far more intuitive and easier to use.

#### Learning objectives:

1. Understanding what is the tool Sketchpad app
2. Understanding how it can be use in the context of social work
3. Being able to use the tool in an online or hybrid setting
4. Being able to target different groups and settings

#### Theoretical and contextual background:

Digital art workshops come in many variations. The focus of this workshop is to increase the user's digital knowledge and competences, in order to be able to unfold creatively by digital means.

Digital art and creativity differ from art and creativity in a traditional sense, by requiring certain basic digital skills in terms of using the digital medium by which the user will express themselves artistically. Unlike, for example, painting in the traditional sense, the canvas in digital art is virtual and has many “technical” possibilities for expression. The virtual canvas has certain advantages that the physical canvas does not have to the same extent. With the virtual canvas, the user has the opportunity to "undo" and delete his artistic actions immediately. Another advantage of the virtual canvas is also that the user can quickly combine and arrange several different types of art on the same canvas, e.g. pictures, clipart, drawing and writing. Another obvious advantage is also that both the digital art medium and the materials to produce the "art" are free. Art in the traditional sense is often associated with relatively expensive use costs for materials, such as canvas and paint, etc.

However, from a pedagogical perspective, there are some aspects that the trainer should consider in preparation for virtual/hybrid artistic activities:

- Who is the target group?
- What are the users' digital prerequisites?
- What kind of art media will be appropriate for the needs of users?
- Which digital tool works best with the chosen media; laptop, tablet...?
- How shall the training take place; online or as hybrid training?
- What opportunities do users have for support and feedback along the way?

The purpose of Digital Art workshops is for the end users to express themselves artistically or get creative through digital art. Based on the fact that the target group in this context often consists of vulnerable people with limited opportunities for social contact, the trainer should consider implementing physical activity, combined with virtual activity. This in order to bring people physically together as a group, establish personal contact and create relationships between the participants. The personal relationships will be of great benefit to the participants, especially if they are socially isolated. At the same time, social relations created around a common purpose, here in the form of Digital Art workshops, will facilitate the formation of long-term personal relationships between the participants independently of the workshop.

For this reason, while Digital Art Workshops can be considered an artistic form, it can also be applied in the context of interventions aimed to involve individuals or groups in a process of self-expression, empowerment and sharing of thoughts and ideas based on creative methods.

The process of creating through digital art helps users to express themselves through an online media, using a wide variety of materials, in this case for free. The workshops serve as an expressive medium combining digital artistic expression with personal interaction, when the workshops are performed as a hybrid training. The combination of working with

something of personal interest, expanding users' digital competences in a physical group session when possible, can help break down the barriers of social isolation.

A Digital Art Workshop session can be implemented as an online session only - for example as a mean of self-expression. Or it can be implemented in the context of a broader social intervention where the social interaction is just as important as the digital art training.

After pieces of digital art have been created, a feedback session, where participants are invited by the facilitator to share and comment their results with the rest of the group is a good idea. Depending on the purpose of the intervention, the facilitator can ask questions aimed to elicit the creative process making the participants comment on their own and each other's results, sharing ideas for specific tools or techniques used creating the piece of art.

### **Description of the method/ approach/ strategy:**

The process for the creation of a Digital Art Workshops should be planned as hybrid sessions, if possible, combining physical workshops with online workshops. This is to support the social aspect of the workshops, so that digital artistic activities are combined with social interaction.

Prior to the training participants must be made aware that participating in the Digital Art Workshop requires some kind of digital hardware with an internet connection – e.g. a laptop or a tablet.

The first workshop should be planned as a physical workshop if possible, getting to know each other and making facilitating the process easier for the trainer. Subsequent workshops can then be planned as a combination of online and physical workshops, as the participants have now gained a basic knowledge of the use of Sketchpad and know each other better. It is easier to contact another participant online for advice or knowledge sharing if you have met each other physically in advance.

If in accordance with the participants' wishes, the trainer can facilitate the preparation of a common participant list, making participant connection on their own easier.

### **Interactive activities instruction in steps:**

- Prior to the workshop the trainer can ask the participants to consider a motive or topic they would like to work with. Or the trainer can select a common motive for the participants to work with.
- Ask the participants to open their internet browser and search for Sketchpad app. Make sure to tell the participants that this is an online freeware program, meaning

they do not have to download or pay for the use of the Sketchpad app. Having found the Sketchpad app, click the link.

- The app opens with a patterned canvas as a default selection. If the trainer has selected a common motive for the participants to work with, introduce this motive now. In the video tutorial made for this exercise the participants are asked to create a birthday invitation, using clip art, images and text. An example of how the invitation could look like is shown.
- Now participants should be asked to customize the default patterned canvas to a blank white canvas – this is done at the + icon at the left menu bar. Click the icon and a selection of different canvases appear – ask the participants to select the blank white canvas and press the Create button.
- Ask the participants to click the Settings icon at the left menu bar. Enable “Snap To Guides” by sliding to the right. This is done in order to enable snapping/aligning of items on the canvas.
- Now ask the participants to click the Clipart icon in the left menu bar. Press the arrow to the right of the clipart image to get a selection of different clipart. At the top there is a search field – ask the participants to search for cake and then gift to select a cake and a gift for the canvas.
- Click and hold the selected clipart and drag it on to the canvas. As you drag the clipart the size might expand – you adjust the size of the clipart in the corners. The corner marked with an arrow allows you to rotate the clipart. Click and hold on the clipart to drag it anywhere you like on the canvas.
- In this exercise the participants are now asked to search for images which cannot be found in Sketchpad – images of balloons and fireworks are searched on Google.
- Ask the participants to open their browser window (without closing the Sketchpad window!) and in Google search for balloons and fireworks images (select image display).
- As we would like the image of the balloons to appear in front of a background, search for the file option PNG – this option makes the balloons appear in front of an image, without blocking the image behind with a frame. Right-click the selected image and press “Save as” to save the image on your own drive – you will need to import the image to the canvas later.
- The image of the fireworks should serve as a background image on the canvas. In this case it is not mandatory to select the PNG option, just search for fireworks. Right-click the selected image and press “Save as” to save the image on your own drive – you will need to import the image to the canvas later.
- Go back to the Sketchpad window and click the Clipart icon. Click at the top red bar “Load Your Own Image” – a new window opens enabling you to select your own images from your own drive.



- Select the image you want to insert – start with the fireworks – and click “Open”. Now the image appears on the canvas. Drag the corners of the image to make the image cover the canvas, it should serve as a background image.
- The image of the fireworks will now be blocking the clipart of the cake and gift. Now right-click the image of the fireworks and select “Send to back” in the menu. Now the fireworks serve as a background and the cake and the gift appear again.
- We would like to tone the image appearing softer – click the “Styles” icon on the canvas. An opacity slider now appears – drag the slider until you are satisfied with the toning of the image and click the image again.
- Next you insert the image of the balloons – click the Clipart icon. Click at the top bar “Load Your Own Image” – a new window opens enabling you to select your own images from your own drive.
- Select the image of the balloons and click “Open”. Now the image appears on the canvas. Drag the corners of the image to adjust the size of the image.
- Now snap / align the images of the balloons, cake and gift to appear visually aligned – while dragging the images on the canvas blue/red lines will guide you when images align horizontally and vertically.
- Ask the users to click the T icon (text) at the left menu bar. Select the “Choose Font” in the menu by clicking the arrow at the right. Now you can scroll through the selection of fonts to find the one you like. Click the selected font.
- Then in the menu select the colour of the font. You can select the filling and the outline of the font, which on the canvas will show as a combination of colours.
- Click the canvas again and a text box will appear saying “Your Text Here!”. Type your desired text in the text box. In this exercise Birthday invitation is a heading.
- Click the Move icon on the canvas to drag/position the text box on the canvas.
- Some more text needs to be added, this time appearing in a frame. Click the Clipart icon and search for “frame” in the search field. Click the frame you like and drag it to the canvas. The selected frame in the exercise is blank, with no background – we would like a background for the text, so:
- Click the Star icon and select the “Choose shape” in the menu by clicking the arrow at the right. Click the “Rectangle” and then click the canvas. Drag the rectangle in to the frame.
- Make the rectangle fit the frame making it just a bit smaller than the frame. Then right-click in the rectangle and select “Send backwards”, making the rectangle appear behind the frame.
- Click the T icon (text) at the left menu bar. Select the “Choose Font” in the menu by clicking the arrow at the right. Now you can scroll through the selection of fonts to find the one you like. Click the selected font.
- Then in the menu select the colour of the font. You can select the filling and the outline of the font, which on the canvas will show as a combination of colours - in this exercise we select a different colouring than the heading.

- Click the rectangle and a textbox appears saying “Your Text Here!”. Type your desired text in the text box. Click the Move icon to position the text box in the frame and drag the corners of the text box to adjust the size.
- Now click the Export icon in the left menu to save the birthday invitation in your own drive. In the menu there are different download options – select a suitable option, for images the JPEG or PNG options are good.
- Click the User Guide icon at the bottom. By clicking this icon, the Sketchpad user guide appears with a menu of topics at the left. Click any desired topic and an explanation of the topic is shown, often with a video tutorial of the specific topic or function.

### **Challenges and tips for implementation in different classrooms contexts:**

The structure of the workshop can be adapted according to:

Size of the group (if the group is large, working groups and discussions will take more time)

ICT literacy of the group (if the group has limited ICT skills, it might be necessary to allow more time in explaining how to implement the procedures from a digital point of view and providing more one-to-one guidance)

Educational / professional focus of the group: if the group is homogeneous and working with the same target group (i.e. disability, old-age, youth, addiction...) you might adapt the lessons more precisely to the needs of the target group. As mentioned earlier, the composition of a group with roughly equal digital competences can be an advantage, both in terms of explanations, feedback and pace of the process.

Supporting material for practicing/understanding/implementing the method: (Video tutorial guiding the user step by step through the exercise: Creating a birthday invitation):

<https://vimeo.com/708562202/97d0dc5295>

### **Self-assessment activity:**

Please rate the extent to which you feel you can perform with confidence the following tasks (1 = minimum confidence – 5 = maximum confidence)

	1	2	3	4	5
Introduce a Digital Art Workshop to a group of users					
Set psycho-social goals to be achieved through a Digital Art session					
Deliver a Digital Art session physically and online (hybrid)					
Support users in accessing and using Sketchpad creating their own digital art					
Adapt the Digital Art Workshop to a specific audience					

If you rate any of the items 3 or below, please go back to your trainer and ask for more clarifications or support.

## Narrative gerontology & digital storytelling

**What it is:** narrative gerontology deals with supporting life writing and reminiscence with older adults and facilitating reminiscence and life review group work. This technique, conceived to be used in face to face setting, can be instilled in digital storytelling, which is a creative way for people to share their stories using a combination of voice, images and music.

### Training module: narrative gerontology & digital storytelling (Duration: 4 hours)

#### Introduction/ Overview – short description of the module:

With this module, we aim to introduce the concepts of Narrative Gerontology and Digital Storytelling and how they can work as a valuable resource in digital social work intervention/activities.

We expect that learners will have a deeper understanding of how to apply this concept by providing critical information about it and its main benefits. In this module, it is also predictable that learners will get more confident using Digital Narrative Gerontology in their professional context.

They will have a deeper understanding of the benefits and the added value that this kind of activity can bring to their professional context, namely in the intervention of social workers.

Also, they will be presented with an ICT tool that they can use to create the stories that will merge from activities related to Digital Narrative Gerontology – the StoryJumper.

#### Learning objectives:

- Define the concepts of Narrative Gerontology and Digital Storytelling.
- Raise understanding of how these concepts can be combined as an innovative resource.
- Raise awareness of how these concepts can be used in the context of social work,
- Raise confidence to apply this resource in a digital environment.
- Understand how StoryJumper – an ICT tool – can be a helpful resource in implementing activities related to Narrative Gerontology and Digital Storytelling.

#### Theoretical and contextual background:

The progressive ageing of the population brings a series of challenges to the community regarding physical and psychological health. This situation underlines the importance of developing innovative interventions to improve and maintain psychological health later in life. In this way, storytelling, at a later stage of life, has been recognized as an essential activity in supporting older people's emotional and psychological well-being (Stargatt et al., 2019).

In this scope, we underline the concept of Narrative Gerontology. Narrative Gerontology is the process in which an older person tells their life story (narration) as a retrospective of their life. The specificity of Narrative Gerontology consists of an intergenerational approach between the storyteller (elderly person) and the person who records the stories (stories collector, usually from a

younger generation) through informal learning for both parties, providing healthier ageing for the older adults (Pecorini et al., 2017). This methodology is responsible for bringing several benefits and improving the feeling of well-being of the elderly through intergenerational sharing, allowing "healthy ageing" (Pecorini et al., 2017).

According to Guillemot et al. (2010, retrieved from Pecorini et al., 2017), older people get engaged in activities in which they can tell a story about themselves because of their intrinsic motivations:

- Flattering to the ego (feeling of self-confidence and success/achievement);
- Ego Repair (heal, resilience);
- Not being forgotten (transgenerational);
- Sharing (education and learning experience);
- Conveying (appreciation, meaning of life);
- Witness (remember, communicate).

The concept of digital storytelling uses a set of multimedia resources and focuses mainly on stories that are generally not heard, such as those told by older adults. It is used in different contexts, namely the defence of social justice and knowledge construction in subjects such as public health, social work and education. It can combine text, images, video, audio and "social media". In public health and social work, the digital narrative is increasingly used to acquire additional knowledge and, consequently, plan actions aimed at people who may have less visibility as more isolated (McGovern, 2018).

Stories narrated can include topics such as life experiences, living with diseases and factors that contribute to longevity, so it works as a practical resource to make positive changes in confidence, speech quality, the meaning of life/purpose and companionship, social involvement, and motivation (Pan et al., 2018).

Some of the benefits of digital storytelling include promoting social connections, the construction of memories into stories, and remembering significant experiences, contexts, and therapeutic experiences. Professionals working in the community can also benefit from digital storytelling activities by getting a framework for understanding community issues in their contexts (Heck & Tsai, 2022).

Valuing the ageing process, the well-being, and the meaning of life in older people are concepts that are at the basis of narrative gerontology to improve the quality of life of these seniors. Narrative gerontology can be associated with digital narrative benefiting the storyteller, the researcher, and the listeners (Pecorini et al., 2017).

Face-to-face and digital storytelling are effective methodologies to prevent the negative attitudes and prejudices towards ageing that often exist in younger generations. In their research, Sljivic et al. (2021) concluded that exposure to gerontology storytelling led to the emergence of a positive and empathetic attitude towards the narrator of the stories. Some characteristics of the narrator (e.g. tone of voice, the content of the story) promoted empathy, allowing a deeper understanding of the elder's experience, especially when the listener is familiar with or passed through similar aspects of the story the narrator is telling.

In addition to bringing advantages to the narrator himself, this methodology can be used for educational purposes to better understand older adults in the community, for example, in universities, elderly homes, hospitals, and schools. The technological character of digital storytelling provides additional benefits compared to face-to-face storytelling as it allows for easier sharing and access. The stories narrated by older people will be filmed and edited through digital programmes. In this way, it can be kept in a secure place (e.g. pen drive; google drive) to be seen in the future and also shared, for example, with significant people of the person that told a little bit about his/her story (e.g. the family of the older person) (Sljivic et al., 2021).

Digital storytelling allows seniors to become digital producers, connect with others through history and explore their life stories. A study carried out with older women, half of them migrants, revealed a rich set of social and emotional benefits experienced throughout the process of creating digital gerontology storytelling (Hausknecht et al., 2019):

- Increased feeling of connection to others and the self.
- Connection with future generations.
- Rewarding activity for the older people involved.
- It encourages reflection on life experiences and helps to give them a new meaning.
- Increase self-confidence and self-pride from creating digital work that can be shared with others (lasting effect).
- Increase a sense of well-being by creating a worthwhile educational experience.

#### **Description of the method/ approach/ strategy:**

Digital storytelling is an intergenerational activity between older and younger people – an exciting activity to be performed between grandparents and grandchildren, for example.

The stories collected during the narrative gerontology are usually transcribed as text, photomontage or oral records. In this way, it makes sense to associate it with digital storytelling: stories will not only be narrated but, at the same time, they will also be kept in a digital format (e.g. video, audio record). They can listen as several times as wanted.

Some considerations must be highlighted to implement the digital gerontological storytelling methodology ((Pecorini et al., 2017):

Images in movement, graphics, and audio produce a multimedia product version or a "remix" (remixed) version of the stories.

2–the 5-minute digital story told in the first person (summary of the person's life story or summary of the person's experience related to a specific theme).

Two people, the listener and the narrator, are from different generations, with different skills, knowledge, values, life experiences and life expectancy.

The listener should express interest in what the narrator mentions by reminding them that they are contributing to something, creating, communicating, and sharing.

It is also important to underline that although older adults, in general, are less familiar with new technologies, the connection with younger generations in the development of this narrative gerontology allows overcoming this gap.

Several ICT tools can work effectively in the implementation of activities related to Narrative Gerontology and Digital Storytelling, such as:

- Elementari is an online platform that gathers artists and writers and allows everyone who is interested in creating their own interactive stories. The platform contains a vast stock of images and sounds that can be used, promoting the work of the artists who have created them. With the free account, teachers/trainers or professionals can create a class and up to 35 student accounts. They can then create their own stories by adding text, animations, and sound and share them with others.
- StoryJumper is an online platform that allows teachers and students to create stories and narrate them by adding voice files to text and images. Users only need a free account to enjoy the platform's features, but there are also paid options that allow them to download and print their stories in a book format.

The story is a free app (both available for Android and iOS devices) that allows users to tell stories through their photographs. The app accesses the photos stored on the users' phones and turns them automatically into a movie. To curate the best life narrative possible, the user can then add text, sound, and all the aspects regarding the organization of the photos and the transitions between them.

StoryJumper seems an effective ICT tool to be used as a method to implement an activity related to Digital Narrative Gerontology. This platform is in line with the aim and techniques of Narrative Gerontology, as it includes music, photos and even audio record to complement the final result – the story. It is also possible to develop avatars to look like the story's narrator or other critical actors.

Besides StoryJumper was created for teachers to use in classrooms with students, it can be easily adapted to other contexts, as in the case of social workers, in their intervention with their clients. StoryJumper allows simultaneous collaboration between different people in the creation of the same story.

Using this ICT Tool, clients can create their own stories, with the collaboration of the social worker (professional), despite the physical distance between them. It is also possible to create a book with stories from different clients, for example.

#### **Interactive activities description in steps:**

- Think about a specific subject or special day (e.g. Valentine's Day, Christmas, Mother's/Father's Day, among others).
- Contact family members or significant people for each older person. Ask them to send 2 or 3 questions related to the topic chosen in the previous step. Questions can be related to a curiosity that the family has and want to know more about the older adult (e.g. the topic chosen in the previous step was Valentine's Day, and the grandson wants to know how his grandparents met each other), or something significant for the person (e.g. the topic chosen



in the previous step was Christmas and the daughter asks about a family tradition because she knows that it is something unique/necessary for the person). Questions can be sent by email (written) in audio record format, among others.

- Ensure that the listener has an account (or creates one) in StoryJumper (<https://www.storyjumper.com/>), where you will create the stories.
- Organize the space where the activity will take place, as well as define the necessary resources/materials – it is essential to consider a neutral space where the person may feel comfortable making the record. Define who will carry out the activity of “interviewing” the elderly – considering that there are always professionals who are a reference (and consequently, may make the elderly more comfortable to be filmed) or who have a more suitable profile for elaborate this type of activities (e.g. a relationship of trust and proximity previously established with the person)
- In the space defined for recording, the professional must instruct the elderly person who will be recorded: "I have 2 or 3 questions here that your son/grandson/neighbour would like you to answer on the topic x (e.g. Christmas). I will ask you to answer each question, mentioning what is most important to you. Remember that the record will take about 3 minutes, so it is important to focus on what is important to you"—afterwards, the professional starts making the questions individually and films the answers.
- Compile the authorized stories for dissemination/sharing with family members/significant people or within the scope of other organization activities.

*Note:*

After compiling the records, it is possible to add a group dynamic with the older people. If the listener wants, he can organize an activity in which the stories are shared and then take a moment for group reflection on the topic addressed in the stories.

Also: if the original video/record is more prolonged than 3min (of the older person), we recommend sending the complete version to the relatives. This way, they could keep a pleasant memory for themselves and their families.

**Challenges and tips for implementation in different classrooms contexts:**

It is ESSENTIAL to have the informed consent of the person that is going to participate in digital narrative gerontology. In this way, it is imperative to take into consideration the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) when implementing this type of activity.

The professional who will facilitate the activity must consider that the questions should not be too deep or personal not to make the person feel uncomfortable.

The professional - a person who has already established a trusting relationship with the elderly – should have at least a little information about their past context and possible topics that may be more sensitive. The professional should be aware of topics that may be more sensitive for the elders (e.g., if it is an activity on Mother's Day and a person has already lost a child).

The professional should look for a neutral space without major stimuli to avoid interfering with the quality of the record (e.g. little noise, neutral walls, ensuring privacy for recording the person).

Consider more than one facilitator for the group activity so that everyone involved receives the necessary attention if it is a large group (+ 15 people)

To make the activity more intergenerational, we can suggest that family members participate in the record, being the ones responsible for asking the questions to the older person (for example, taking the opportunity of a moment when the family member goes to the organization to visit the older person or have a meeting with the professionals of the organization)

To make the activity more enriching, the listener can also ask family members to add photographs or a song related to the topic (e.g. if it is about Christmas, ask them to send a family photo of Christmas; include a piece of music they sang together every Christmas). The listener can add this type of resource to the StoryJumper ICT tool.

This activity can be adapted so that the stories can stimulate awareness-raising sessions for a particular theme, for example. Some topics can stimulate the production of awareness-raising sessions (e.g., older adults make digital storytelling focused on the topic of climate change. The professional can edit the stories and prepare an awareness session about climate change, including the presentation of the stories edition, with real testimonials).

#### **Supporting material for practising/understanding/implementing the method (exercises, case studies, videos, interactive resources):**

- Seniors Junction Podcast – Episode 17: Senior isolation and narrative gerontology  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UTFs56LdjYA&t=37s>
- Narrative Therapy Example (with a different target group, just for inspiration):  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lp9eAEWc\\_yA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lp9eAEWc_yA)
- Home page of StoryJumper: <https://www.storyjumper.com/>
  
- Video Tutorial of StoryJumper: <https://www.storyjumper.com/book/create>

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### Self-assessment activity:

Please rate the extent to which you feel you can perform with confidence the following tasks (1 = minimum confidence – 5 = maximum confidence)

	1	2	3	4	5
Introduce Narrative Gerontology and Digital Storytelling to a group of users					
Set psycho-social goals to be achieved through a session related to Gerontology Narrative and Digital Storytelling					
Deliver an activity related to Gerontology Narrative and Digital Storytelling					
Support users in creating their Digital Storytelling video					
Adapt the techniques of Narrative Gerontology and Digital Storytelling to a specific audience					

If you rate any items three or below, please return to your trainer and ask for more clarification or support.



Project Partners

