

DIGITS

Soft DIGITal Skills building for TCN women

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NATIONAL REPORT

Poland



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Executive summary

The learning background of third-country national women in Poland widely varies. Some third-country national women may have advanced digital skills and be well-versed in using technology for communication, work, and other purposes, while others may have limited experience with technology. The level of access to technology and opportunities for digital skill development may also depend on a variety of factors, such as socio-economic status, language barriers, and cultural attitudes towards technology. It is important to note that these generalizations may not apply to every individual as it is shown multiple times in this report and that only a comprehensive study presents a more accurate picture of a digital skillset of third-country national women in Poland.

Since Poland's migration landscape is so diverse and to gather information, the online survey was translated into 6 additional languages and data was collected from 42 TCN women. The results showed that the group of women who lack digital skills the most was underrepresented. To complete data the team conducted interviews and focus groups with educators/professionals and 11 third country national women. The findings showed that the staff of organizations working with TCN women need to be qualified to provide training in digital skills, including the national language and understanding of core humanitarian standards. The educators were interested in improving their capacities in providing digital education due to challenges they face daily, such as low attendance of participants and often lack of access to those in need. The project's focus should be on daily skills and should be supplementary to what is offered by other organizations. The main challenges faced by TCN women in developing their digital skills and entering the digital labor market are a lack of individual support and equipment. Women also face difficulties in accessing information and services, and most of all finding jobs and... friends.



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1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has underlined the enormous contributions migrants make to their communities across the world, as well as the need for cohesive integration support for the promotion of migrants' own health and well-being. In many societies, representing a significant portion of the 'frontline' workforce, migrants have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic – both physically and in terms of access to information and services. The adaptation of systems to allow for online service provision has been a key focus for service providers during this global health crisis, but for many migrants – and other vulnerable groups – accessing such online support can be difficult.

The European Commission's EU action plan on integration and inclusion 2021-2027 highlights particular concerns around lack of internet connection, language barriers, lack of e-ID and lack of digital skills on the part of third-country nationals (TCNs) across Europe. More specifically, many migrants that are internet non-users are at particular risk of social isolation, due to their digital exclusion. It's true that migrants also face additional barriers to digital inclusion, due to a reliance on others to translate the websites of service providers and social media platforms to their native languages. While the pandemic has prompted more innovative approaches to service delivery, digital inclusion is of paramount importance.

Although the digital sector is rapidly growing, creating hundreds of thousands of new jobs every year, the share of women in this sector is decreasing. Women and especially Third-Country National (TCN) women are under-represented at all levels in the digital sector in Europe. Women in Poland, Romania and Greece are the least likely to be taking part in the digital economy, either through employment, use of the internet, or skills. TCN women have limited opportunities to access digital skills training and to access digital employment opportunities. Therefore, migrants who lack access to online connectivity, digital devices and skills have been further isolated during the pandemic.

Consequently, the main objective of the **DIGITS** project is to improve the digital inclusion of TCN women in selected EU countries through practical tools and tailored educational interventions to ensure a better quality of life for them. More specifically, the DIGITS project aims to improve national and transnational understanding of the digital inclusion needs of TCN women in the EU. It is important to develop practical tools and gather useful resources in terms of digital inclusion and thus social justice for women with a migrant-refugee background.

To this end, the DIGITS consortium will prioritize increasing participation rates among people with fewer opportunities, specifically migrant and non-digitally literate women, in line with the principles of the 2020-25 Gender Equality Strategy as a vehicle for the promoted gender perspective in the proposed action. Our approach will be integrated to improve the capacity of professionals and stakeholders who have direct access to TCN women on how to develop their digital skills and ultimately empower them. Also, a specific objective is to raise awareness



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among professionals, relevant stakeholders and the public on the digital inclusion needs of TCN women.

Each county involved in PR1 entitled “**Developing a common understanding regarding the modern digital inclusion needs of TCN women in Europe**” (Poland, Greece, Austria, Germany) will produce its own brief national report presenting the main findings and conclusions of the tasks assigned under PR1. In parallel, the output leader (Symplexis) will produce a brief transnational report, consolidating the findings of all national reports. The key aim of these reports is to identify the policy needs and define key principles regarding the digital inclusion of TCN women. Undoubtedly, this task will provide a solid base so that research institutions can extend this analysis and design relevant research at a wide scale.

More in detail, the present **national report** will present:

- 1) Summary of the desk research exercise identifying the prior learning background and existing digital skillset of TCN women in Poland.
- 2) Key findings reached through the online survey.
- 3) Key findings reached through the organized focus group(s) / interviews in Poland with professionals working with TCN women.
- 4) Key findings reached through the organized focus group(s) / interviews in Poland with TCN women.
- 5) Key findings reached through the targeted consultation with selected key stakeholders in Poland.
- 6) Presentation of selected good practices that focus on initiatives, capacity building programmes, trainings etc. targeted to TCN women, especially those who are digital field oriented and initiatives, projects, trainings etc. addressing educators and/or professionals or volunteers, aimed at advancing TCN women-related teaching practices.
- 7) National level conclusions and recommendations that should be linked with the digital capacity building programme for TCN women.



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2. Desk research

Third-country national women face several unique challenges when attempting to integrate into Polish society. Many of these women face language barriers, as they may not speak Polish or have limited language skills. This can make it difficult for them to communicate with others and make their way around the country. Additionally, discrimination based on race, religion, and nationality can be a major issue for TCN women in Poland. They may be subject to verbal and physical abuse or be denied access to certain services due to their background. In addition, third-country nationals women in Poland often lack legal protection. This can leave them vulnerable to exploitation and mistreatment, and make it difficult for them to seek legal recourse if they are wronged. Despite these challenges, many TCN women have been able to integrate successfully into Polish society. Many have found employment, contributing to the economy and making a positive impact. They have also formed support networks with other immigrants, helping each other to adjust to life in Poland.

In Poland, the population of TCN women is diversified and expanding. Although there is an increasing number of women from Vietnam, India, and other nations, the majority of these women are from Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia. They often face many problems and obstacles regarding their integration and access to the digital world. TCN women often lack the soft digital skills needed to use technology and access digital employment opportunities effectively. In addition, many TCN women have limited access to the internet and digital resources due to language barriers, cultural norms, and lack of resources. Furthermore, the lack of access to digital training courses, as well as the lack of financial resources, can make it difficult for these women to access digital employment opportunities. As a result, TCN women are often left behind in the digital revolution, unable to benefit from the opportunities that technology can offer.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on migrant women in Poland. They have faced a range of difficulties and challenges due to the pandemic, including job losses, increased stress and anxiety, lack of access to healthcare, increased risk of domestic violence, and restricted access to services. Additionally, migrant women have had limited access to digital tools and services that could help them cope during the pandemic. Moreover, due to refugees fleeing war in Ukraine, over 1.4 million individuals registered for Temporary Protection in Poland as of 17th of October 2022 (Refugees From Ukraine In Poland Profiling Update September 2022). According to statistics on unemployment, there are still many obstacles for female third-country nationals, which may hinder their complete integration. During this time, the overall unemployment rate decreased, going from an average of 9% in 2016 to approximately 7% in 2020. (Integration of migrant women, 2022). Polish employment rules that apply to women from third-country nationalities frequently combine Polish and EU law. Foreign women



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may thus encounter some restrictions on their capacity to work in the nation. These limitations may relate to the necessity for a work permit or the kind of employment she is qualified to perform. In addition, it may be more challenging for TCN women to get a job in Poland due to gender and nationality discrimination in the labor market. Employers must be aware of the rights of women from third countries and give them the same work chances as everyone else. All citizens of the EU have the right to travel to and work in another EU nation without first requesting a work permit. The same employment rights and benefits as those enjoyed by EU citizens may apply to citizens of non-EU nations. These privileges are subject to the individual's nationality and perhaps their position as a relative of an EU citizen. (Zatrudnienie, Sprawy Społeczne I Włączenie Społeczne - Obywatele krajów trzecich). Overall, the pandemic has highlighted the need for increased digital access and support for vulnerable groups, such as TCN women in Poland.

As of January 1st 2023, UNHCR states in their report (Ukraine Emergency - UNHCR Poland Factsheet, 2023) that over 1.5 million refugees from Ukraine have registered in Poland for Temporary Protection. The UNHCR organization also conducted 3,596 interviews among Ukrainian refugees, a significant proportion of whom were women (88%). “Almost half of them (46%) held university degrees, a third (33%) had obtained technical or vocational education and one-fifth (19%) - had secondary education. Prior to displacement, a vast majority (69%) were employed and 16% - retired.” (Refugees From Ukraine In Poland Profiling Update November 2022) In response to the challenges faced by migrant women during the pandemic and war, a number of initiatives have been launched to support them. These include providing access to digital tools and services such as virtual consultations, online language courses, and digital literacy training (The Impact of Covid-19 on Ukrainian Women Migrants in Poland, 2021).

Digital transformation has the potential to empower vulnerable groups by providing greater access to services, information, and resources. However, it is important to ensure that digital transformation is implemented in a way that is inclusive, equitable, and accessible to all.

Many TCN women in Poland need to be made aware of the potential opportunities available through digital technologies.

There are a few activities that were or will be carried out in the span of 2020-2023:

- IT Skills 4U program - Ukrainians interested in pursuing an IT career or switching to IT are welcome to participate in the IT Skills 4U programme. By signing up, you get access to the free training, suited to your IT background, that will help you get AWS certifications and find employment in the cloud sector.

[\(https://cloudteam.pl/en/it-skills-4u/\)](https://cloudteam.pl/en/it-skills-4u/)



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- Start IT. Cisco4Ukraine by Wyższa Szkoła Informatyki I Zarządzania w Rzeszowie, Cisco Networking Academy - This program aims to support refugees, regardless of age or environment, who came to Poland and would like to develop digital competencies or consider a new career path or further education in IT.
(<https://cisco4ukraine.pl/>)
- Spirit of Ukraine by ECCC - The ECCC Foundation has prepared an adaptation programme that supports refugees' social, educational, and professional integration into Polish society as well as their professional engagement. The ECCC Foundation suggests gaining or improving competencies and qualifications as part of the "Digitization - Integration" project by having access to free digital training and certification that are required in the workplace.
(<https://www.eccc.edu.pl/spirit-of-ukraine/>)
- Ukraińskie Centrum Edukacji - The Ukrainian Educational Center offers to learn Polish as well as English, IT courses, soft skills training, classes on Polish culture and history, and cultural and educational meetings.
(<https://um.warszawa.pl/-/ruszylo-ukrainskie-centrum-edukacji>)
- New Technologies for Women – Ukraine - The Perspektywy Women in Tech Educational Foundation and Intel Corporation want to encourage progress by providing an annual scholarship and a series of workshops led by top Intel experts.
(<https://www.stypendiadladiwczyn.pl/ukraine/>)
- INCUBATING FREEDOM for Ukraine – Adapting Women to Digital Economy - The plan was to train 30,000 women, mostly refugees from Ukraine temporarily residing in Poland. This will help solve the socio-economic problems of refugees, will ultimately strengthen the economy of Ukraine and will also have important implications for the Polish IT market.
(https://perspektywy.pl/portal/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=7802:ukrainki-i-polki-dla-cyfrowej-przyszlosci-startuje-perspektywy-academy&catid=24&Itemid=119)
- Centrum Szkoleniowe Comarch - The Comarch Training Center organized free training for Ukrainian citizens who came to Poland in connection with the war, and for employees from Ukraine employed in Poland.
(<https://www.comarch.pl/szkolenia/free-training-for-ukrainian-citizens/>)
- The Together platform, along with the largest online programming school in Poland, Kodilla, has launched a retraining initiative for women from Ukraine who want to start a career in IT.



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(<https://www.wprostukraine.eu/pl/poradnik/edukacja/10713553/rozpocznij-swoja-karierę-w-branży-it-dotacje-dla-ukrainek-w-polsce-na-studia.html>)

- Fundacja im. Julii Woykowskiej for migrant women - Dame Stephanie "Steve" Shirley, the legendary pioneer of the IT industry, a British entrepreneur who created the first software company composed of all women in the 1960s, supports the project of the Polish Foundation for Julia Woykowska. As a result, migrants from Ukraine will have a chance to find a job in IT.
(<https://migrant.poznan.pl/pl/aktualnosci/fundacja-im-julii-woykowskiej-zaprasza-na-kurs-programowania-dla-migrantek/>)
- INCO Academy: Work in Tech Ukraine - As part of the Work in Tech Ukraine programme, which INCO is implementing with Google.org's assistance, 1,500 Ukrainian residing in Poland will have free access to Google Professional Certificates courses on Coursera as well as social-psychological support and training to encourage job mobility. Future Collars will assist Ukrainians in gaining essential IT skills and expertise as part of Work in Tech Ukraine. There are only English-speaking Ukrainian courses available. The program was initiated by Future Collars and Accenture along with its partners: The Mamo Pracuj Foundation, Network of Entrepreneurial Women, SoDA and Eklektika.
(<https://futurecollars.com/work-in-tech-ukraine/>)
- Digital SkillUp courses (available in many languages) - Digital SkillUp courses are designed to help you gain new skills in emerging technologies and digital transformation. The participant can choose courses in different areas of the field. They are carried out in many languages such as Croatian, Dutch, English, French, German, Greek, Italian, Polish, Romanian, and Spanish.
(<https://www.digitalskillup.eu/pl/digital-skillup-courses/>)
- Ty nowa, Ty nowy – dla Ukrainy odnowy - The main goal of the training is to provide young people from across the eastern border the opportunity to acquire the necessary education and work experience in the IT sector, as well as, in the long run, to supply Ukraine with personnel that will help it recover from the war's devastating effects.
(<https://www.wroclaw.pl/przedsiębiorczy-wroclaw/ruszył-projekt-szkoleniowy-dla-ukrainy-odnowy>)
- Carrots Academy invites all women, especially those staying in Poland due to the war in Ukraine. A person does not need a PESEL number or a computer - Carrots Academy provides equipment for the duration of the classes. Classes are conducted in English, and experience in technology or technical education will be an advantage.
(<https://www.carrotsacademy.pl/>)



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- Soft skills for teachers - The Association of Innovative and Digital Education, Ukrainian Educational Centers, and the Pro Futuro Foundation with the support of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine invite the Ukrainian educators to participate in the project of acquiring useful "soft" competencies (psychology, stress resistance, digital competences, career management). (<https://poland.eduhub.org.ua/pl/teaching-teachers-skills-pl/>)
- FRSI: "My digital life" (połączenie sił: Ukraina, Polska, Czechy) - My Digital Life is a project to support students and professionals from all sectors (private, public and non-governmental) in the process of digital transformation. The activities are addressed to those who feel the need to improve their qualifications in order to maintain, continue or develop their professional career threatened by the challenges caused by the pandemic. (<https://frsi.org.pl/projekt/my-digital-life/>)

In conclusion, after analyzing found data, one can notice a significant predominance of the Ukrainian language over other languages of TCN women. This is due to the influx of large numbers of refugees fleeing the war. As the demand for help for Ukrainian women increased, so did the number of courses and training conducted specifically in the Ukrainian language. Additionally, there is a clear dearth of workshops and courses on soft skills. By providing free soft skills courses, migrant women in Poland can gain access to the necessary training to gain better employment opportunities, as well as to build their confidence and become more integrated with Polish society.

Programs that concentrate on access to school, employment, and language training require an increase in funding to adequately meet the requirements of TCN women in Poland. Additionally, greater efforts need to be made to ensure that migrant women have access to information. Furthermore, it is important to raise awareness of the challenges facing migrant women in Poland and to combat xenophobia and discrimination. There is a clear need for the training and courses to be conducted in more languages. With the right training, individuals can develop the necessary skills and competencies to succeed in the digital labor market.



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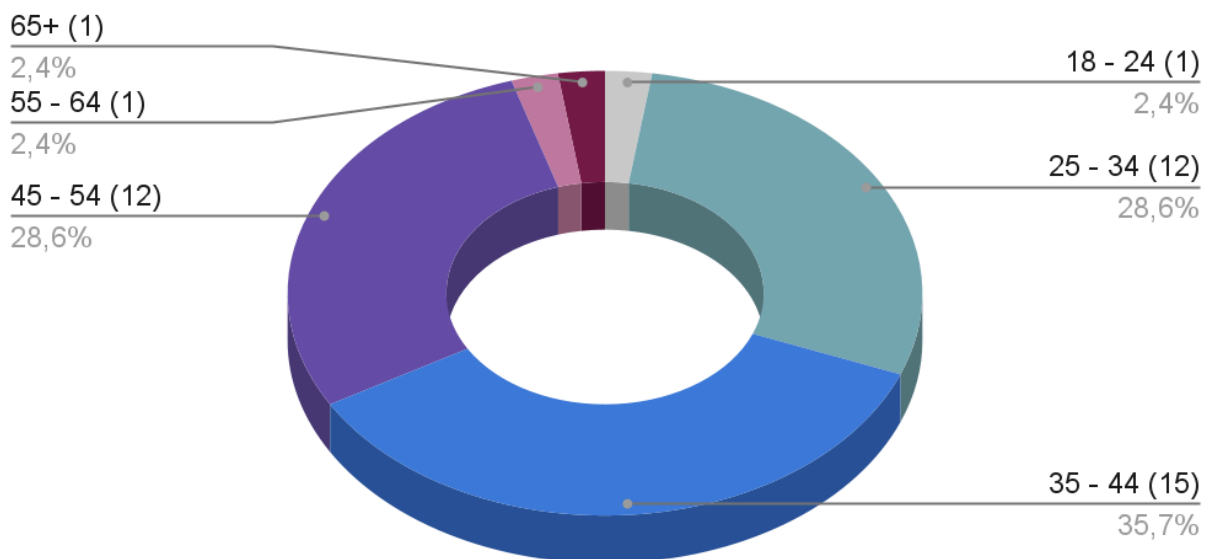
3. Field research

3.1 Online survey

Poland's migration landscape is quite diverse. We decided to translate the online survey into 6 additional languages: Polish, Ukrainian, Russian, Dari, Vietnamese and Georgian. After collecting data from 42 women our team translated the answers into English to enable citing them in this report.

Among 42 participants, one person represented the 18-24 group, 12 women responded from the group of 25-34, 15 from the 35-44 group, one from the 55-64 group, and one from the 65 plus group. Unfortunately, this means that the group endangered by lack of digital skills was heavily underrepresented, which we tried to compensate for in the next step of research - interviews with TCN women.

What is your age group?



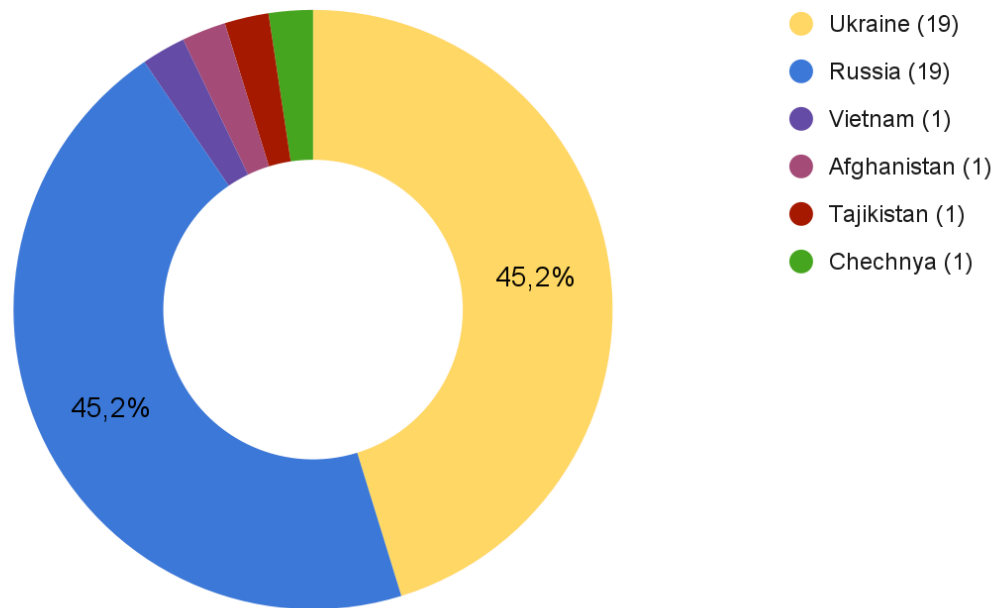
Regarding the nationality of respondents, we received 19 answers from Ukrainian women, 19 from Russian women, and one from Vietnamese, Afghan, Tajik and Chechen women. Therefore women from Ukraine and Russian constitute 90,4% of all respondents.



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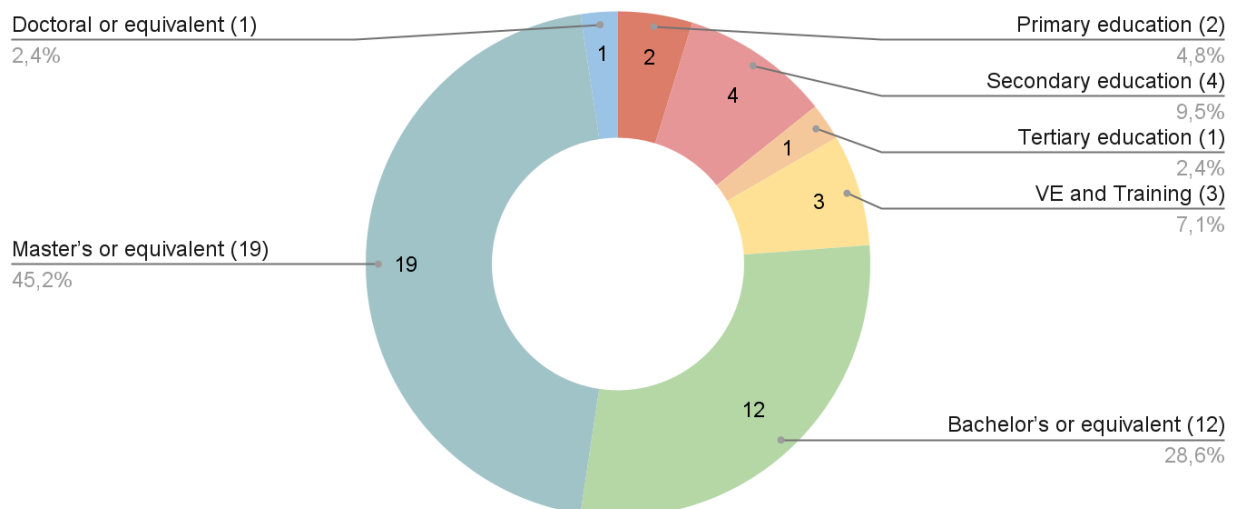
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What is your nationality?



Most of our respondents (76,2%) received higher education 12 at the bachelor level, 19 at the master and one at the doctoral degree. The remaining 10 respondents finished their education in primary school (2), secondary school (4), highschool/tertiary education (1) and vocational school (3).

What is your level of education?

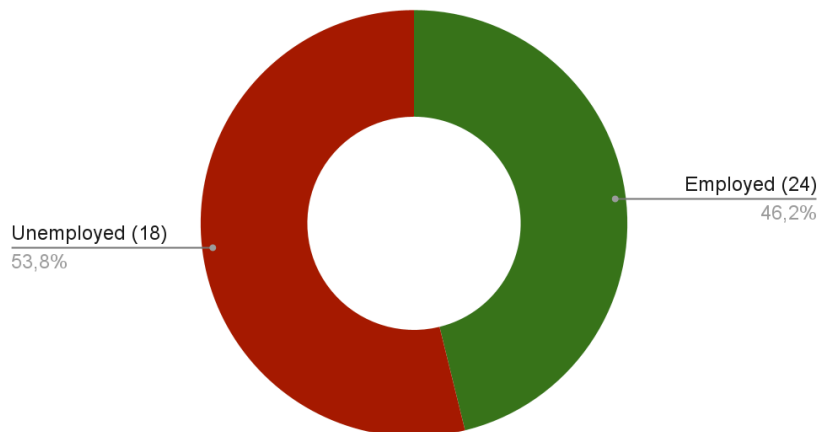


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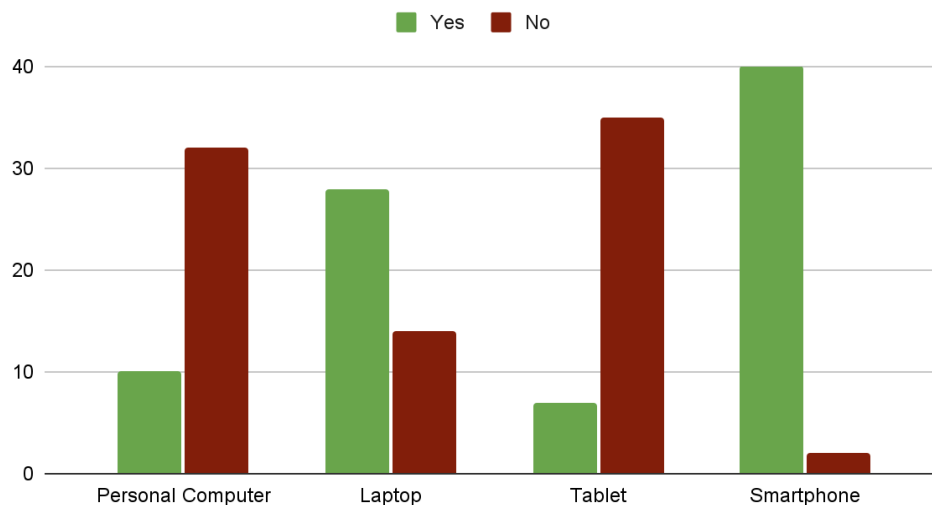
Out of 42 respondents, 24 are currently employed which makes 46,2% of the group. The jobs listed in the survey consist of: 10 women employed within social services and education (including: caregivers, intercultural assistants, caseworkers), office jobs in case of 10 women (including: infoline, editor, accountant, reporting analyst, customer relations specialist, freelancer, chief legal advisor in the banking sector, computer graphic designer, senior software engineer), two working in cleaning service and two in gastronomy.

Are you currently employed?



The majority of the respondents do not own a personal computer or tablet, yet most of them have a laptop (28 women) and almost all of them (40) have their own smartphone. In terms of access to an internet connection 34 respondents have it at home, and 35 respondents have a mobile internet connection.

Do you own a:

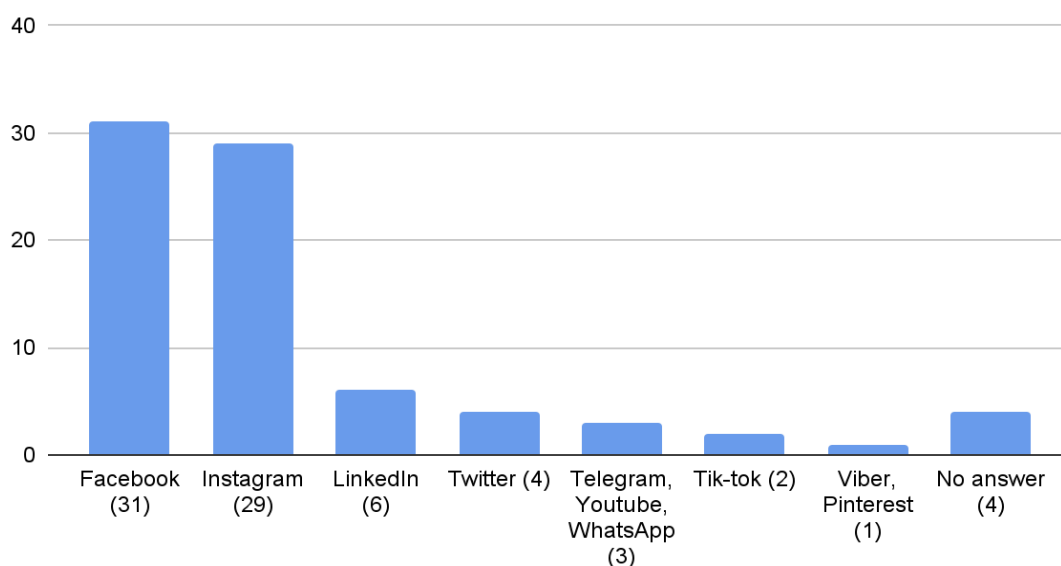


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However, this does not mean that the respondents are fully independent in enjoying digital possibilities which is why some of the respondents needed help filling out the survey. What is interesting is that all the respondents use the internet daily or almost daily, and only one wasn't familiar with any social media platforms. Among the answers about social media, the most frequent ones were Facebook (31) and Instagram (31). Some women pointed in the direction of platforms not mentioned as an example in the question, such as: Telegram, Youtube, WhatsApp, TikTok, Viber and Pinterest.

Which social media platforms are familiar with?



On the topic of attending online training programmes/courses, 31 respondents acknowledged they had such an experience while the remaining 11 did not. The duration of the training varied from singular 3-hour meetings, through repeated classes over the span of 2, 3, 4 months or whole semester of online learning, to 6-month long vocational courses. Some respondents mention only one course (14), and some "several dozen of them". Most popular were language courses (14) - mostly learning Polish, second place took professional and vocational courses (9) eg. beauty service technician, social media marketing or crisis counseling course. There have been few mentions of studying online (3), having job health and safety training (2), and attending workshops (1). Two women even named platforms the courses took place on Zoom and Prometheus.

The next part of the survey is related to using digital government services. Out of all respondents 30, that is 71,4%, claimed they have been using some of those services. Moreover, among the most repeated answers, we found Librus (32,7%), Diia (20,4%), e-Pacjent (18,4%), e-Puap (16,3%), electronic signature, banking/e-Pit/mObywatel (4,1% each). Based on those

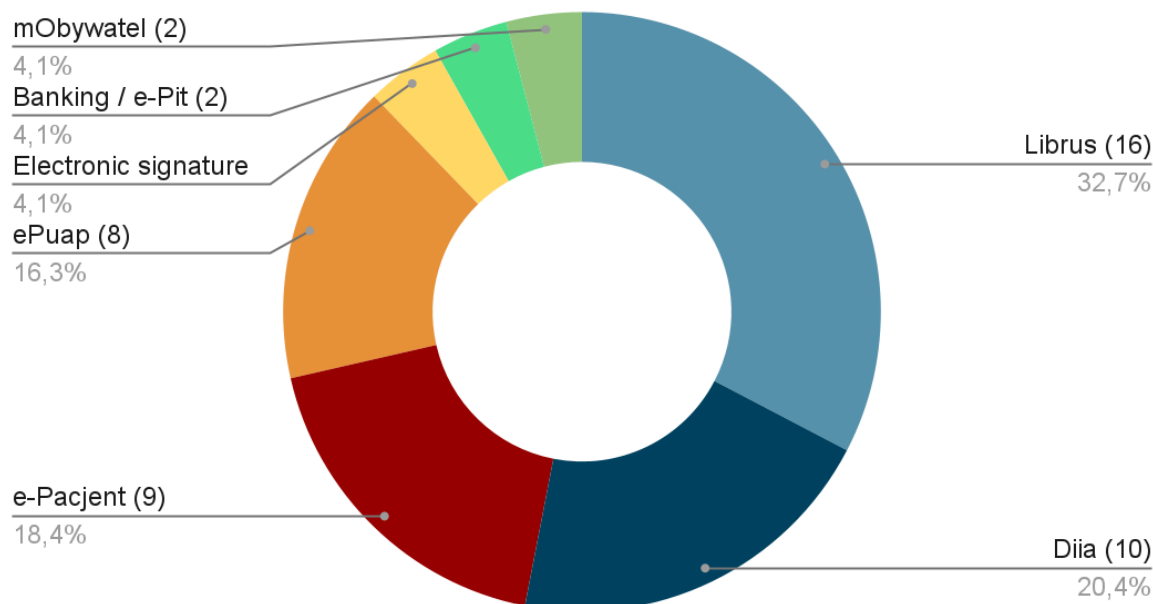


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results we were specifically asking about those platforms during one-on-one interviews with TCN women during field research.

Which digital government services have you used?



The next survey question focused on the perceived importance of the 13 listed soft digital skills. Two soft skills indicated most often were “Use of e-government platforms” and “Effective online communication” - 40 respondents found them “very important” or “important”. In the second place, there are “Searching for training opportunities online” and “Being safe and responsible online” with 39 respondents pointing to their importance. The third place on the podium belongs to “Searching for jobs online” and “Time management / organizational online skills” with 38 answers.

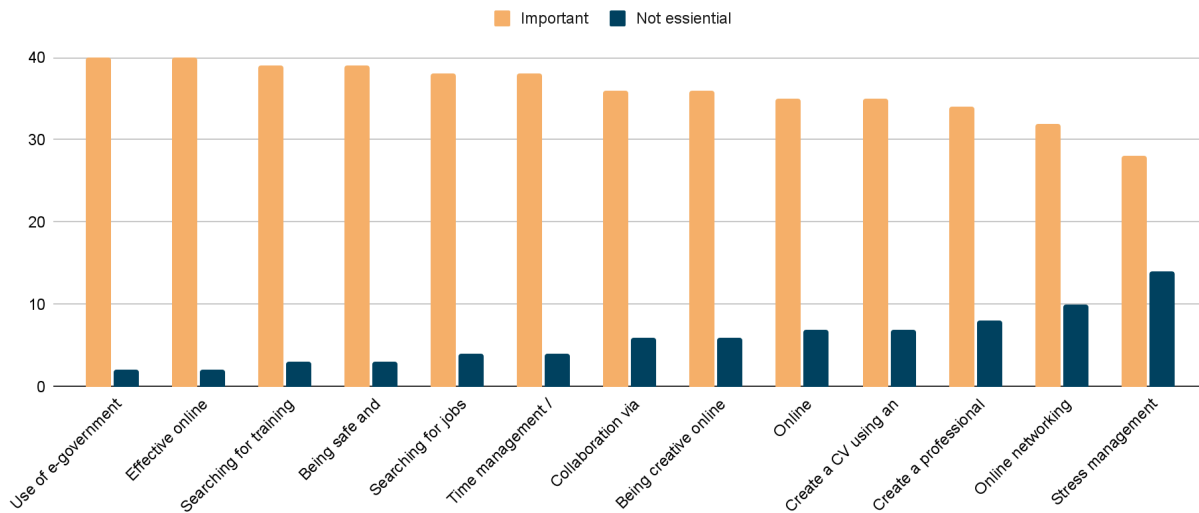
The rest of the skills received similar results: 36 for “Collaboration via online platforms and relevant tools” and “Being creative online”, 35 for “Online entrepreneurship” and “Create a CV using an online template”, 34 for “Create a professional profile on social media”, 32 for “Online networking” and finally only 28 for “Stress management with the help of online tools”.



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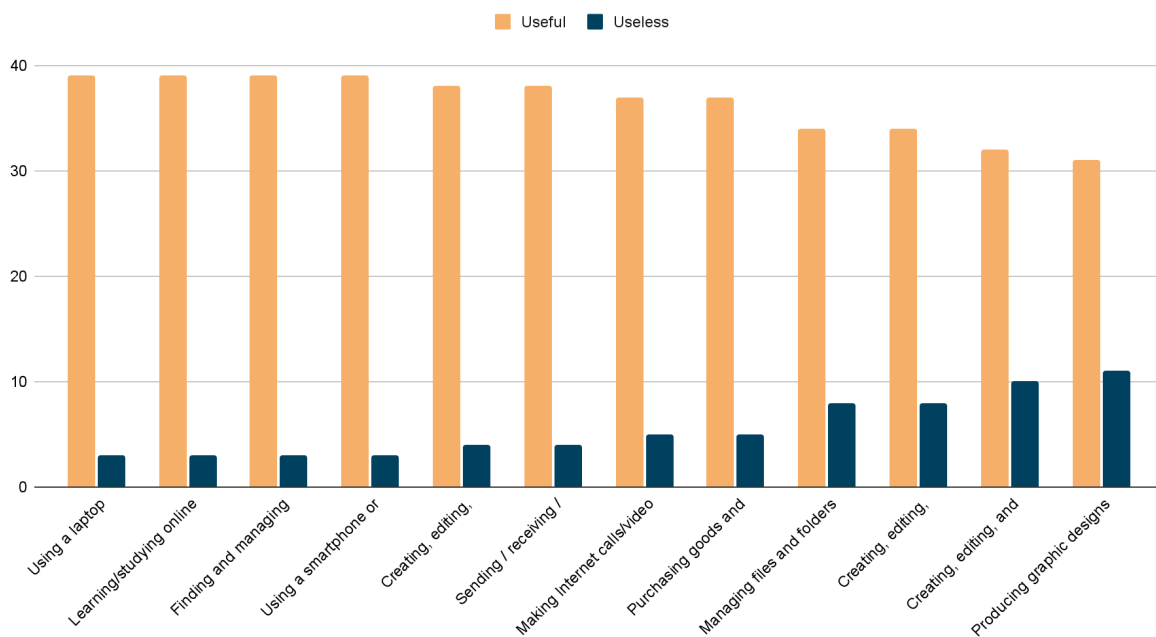
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Combined importance soft digital skills



Questions about the usefulness of listed digital skills in your life and career had comparable answers. “Using a laptop”, “Learning/studying online”, “Finding and managing information on the internet” and “Using a smartphone or tablet” were found useful by 39 women. In second place we found “Creating, editing, formatting, and printing text documents” and “Sending / receiving / printing emails” with 38 answers indicating them as useful skills. “Making Internet calls/video calls” and “Purchasing goods and services online” received 37 positive responses.

Usefulness of digital skills in life and career



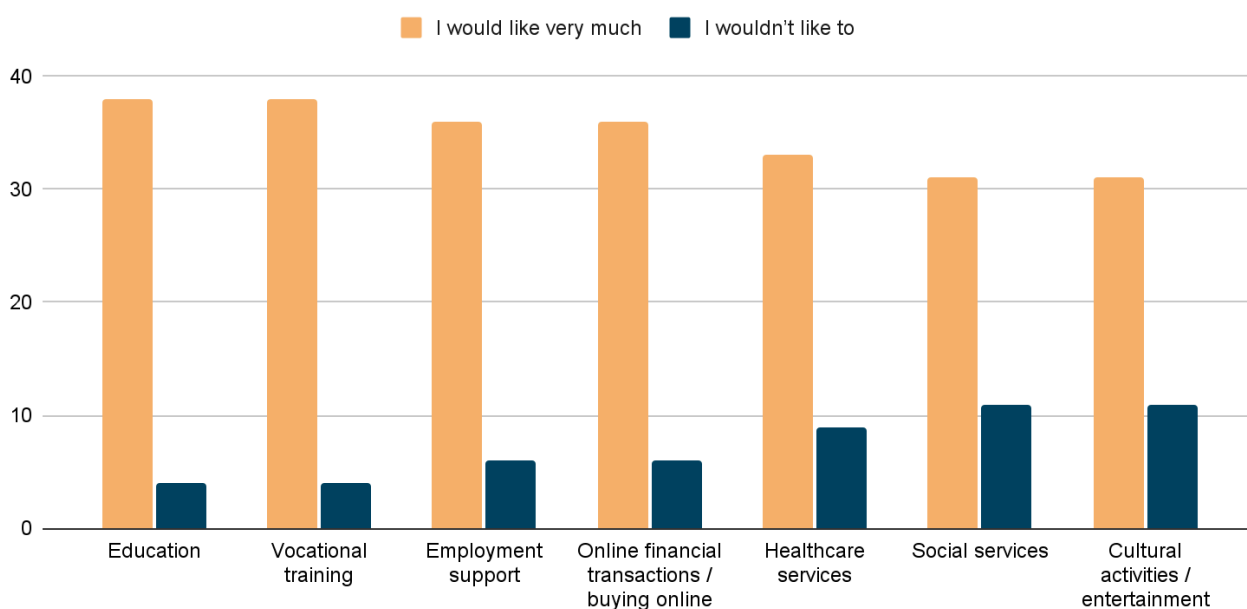
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Meanwhile “Managing files and folders on a computer” and “Creating, editing, formatting, and printing spreadsheets” stopped at 34, “Creating, editing, and formatting presentations” at 32 and “Producing graphic designs” at 31 answers, recognizing skill as desirable to possess in life and career.

The last substantive question investigates the willingness to develop digital skills in listed areas of everyday life. On a scale of 1 to 5, where 5 means “I would like very much” and 1 means “I wouldn’t like at all”. All respondents chose 4s and 5s at least 31 times in each area of life. Areas with the highest score were “Education” and “Vocational training” (38 responses of 4s and 5s), second most popular were “Employment support” and “Online financial transactions / buying online” (36), then “Healthcare services” (33) and finally “Social services” with “Cultural activities / entertainment” (31).

Would you like to develop listed digital skills:



In total, 36 women were interested in receiving more information and/or participating in the training programme, but 1 forgot to leave her email address. While the other 6 did not express such an interest.



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3.2 Interviews and focus groups with educators/professionals

Interviews and focus groups with educators/professionals had taken place in the form of two focus groups (each had 3 participants - one online and one in person) and one individual interview. The first focus group (in person) was organized on the 12th of January 2023 in the office of our foundation. The participants were Iryna Konoplianko, Daria and Alina working professionals in the marketing and IT sector and volunteering part-time in Ukraiński Dom (eng. Ukrainian House), an organization known for working for Ukrainian migrants in Poland, helping them integrate with Polish society and culture, and familiarize Poles with Ukrainian culture.

The second focus group was held online on 17th of January 2023 with Maria, Irina, and Yana from Centrum Wsparcia Kobiet i Dzieci Fundacji "Dobry Start" (eng. Support Center for Women and Children of The Good Start Foundation). The Foundation was created by immigrants and Poles who work together to promote intercultural dialogue and integration of immigrants with the host society. They have implemented numerous projects for foreigners. Guided by the needs of migrants, they have created several free services that support foreigners in integrating with Polish society, such as: language lessons, and legal and psychological advice.

Last but not least we had a meeting on the 12th of January 2023 with Arina Shadiy working in the Polish Migration Forum in the double role of a career counselor and coordinator of a team of psychologists. We met in person in one of our offices where she welcomes migrant women and helps them find good jobs. Polish Migration Forum works to integrate foreigners and Poles living abroad and also initiates and supports activities that lead to dialogue between people of different cultures. The Foundation specializes in information activities, providing direct support to foreigners (psychological, on the labor market, legalization of stay), training (for teachers, psychologists, officials) and activities on the border of formal and informal education (workshops, city games). PFM additionally supports migrant women by organizing childbirth schools and support groups for migrant mothers.

Interviews and focus groups with 7 educators allowed us to come to the conclusion that the learning background of third-country national women in Poland widely varies depending on their country of origin, educational and work experiences and other factors. Some may have received formal education in their home countries, while others may have limited formal education and if they have learned skills it happened through other means.

When it comes to the level of digital skills and knowledge of TCN women in Poland it is considered that young adults usually already have those skills or are able to develop them using materials from the internet. This, of course, is not true for every TCN woman in Poland and we should keep in mind that younger generations need proper education in topics such as safety on the internet, but on most occasions, they are well versed. However, starting as young as in the age group 35/40+ various troubles transpire.



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Contrary to those filling out the survey, in the experience of the educators, a lot of migrant women do not have access to personal computers or laptops so they try to do everything on their phones, often not having a chance of learning computer skills. To enter the digital labor market they cannot usually create and use email, deal with administrative responsibilities (working with a fiscal cash register, trouble with an online bank account, electronic signature, paying taxes, using ePuap and Librus), synchronizing the use of a smartphone with a laptop, using software (Microsoft Office or Google Workspace) in a different language or using it at all, opening a business (learning to use digital marketing, understanding responsibilities of an entrepreneur), doing online orders/shopping, creating and attending online meetings, differentiating what can be done on which social media platform, using basic photo editors, understanding basic rules of cybersafety, and finally finding good job opportunities, creating a CV and preparing for the job interview.

For those reasons, the staff of an organization working with TCN women must be qualified for providing training to them. Knowing the national language is extremely important, understanding core humanitarian standards and being able to stay patient through the process of often repeating oneself are crucial, but also having the motivation to work in a multicultural and usually non-governmental environment. It is also detrimental on one hand to remember about boundaries and on the other hand to keep an individual approach even in group courses. The other thing is keeping the engagement level high and helping with the process of group identity building pays off quickly because when participants begin to help each other and to learn from each other. Lastly, the trainer should not speak ex cathedra, he or she should be able to admit when they do not know some information and encourage learning together.

Even though the educators we spoke with are highly trained they were still interested in further building their capacities on providing digital education to TCN women. It might be caused by challenges they face on a daily basis eg. low attendance of participants. Solely online disseminating information about the course often does not reach those actually in need. That is why it is a good practice to share such information through other NGOs having access to migrants, giving out leaflets and publishing them on Facebook groups and through Instagram. Another challenge faced by migrant women influencing the work of educators is organizing time and caring for their children during the time of training. It is well known among NGOs that organizing such a space with a caregiver greatly improves the capacity of women to attend the course. One other note was to remember to tend to the needs of disabled migrants, as they are in the greatest need of help.

All interviews and focus groups concluded that the scope of our project would be most beneficial if focused on daily skills - creating a house budget, finding a job, and being able to work in an office. It should be supplementary to what is already offered to migrants and trainers. There should always be a way to print out information and train it on their own.



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3.3 One-to-one interviews / focus group(s) with TCN women

All participants of research with TCN women have been interviewed separately. Out of 11 participants, we met with 4 women from the age group 18 - 24, 1 in the 25 - 34 group, 3 in the 35 - 44 group, 2 in the 45 - 54 group and 1 in the 55 - 64 age group. Five participants were Afghan women, two were Tajik, other two were Chchen and there was one Belarussian and one Ukrainian participant. The interview took place between the 10th and 28th of January 2023. Nine participants met with us face-to-face, with two we did the interview online - through WhatsApp.

Out of the four youngest participants (group 18 - 24), all had IT classes in school, all learned to use smartphones and had no trouble acquiring those skills. The first two are still studying (one is working part-time), the third one is trying to get diploma recognition in the field of veterinary, and the fourth one finished highschool but did not go to university. She is looking for a job but has trouble finding one due to a lack of presentation skills during job interviews.

The next four women (aged 34 - 44) did not have such classes (apart from a Ukrainian participant 20 years ago in school) but found a way to learn the basics either by attending courses provided by municipalities or by helping their children study online during the COVID outbreak and communicating with other moms on Messenger. The youngest (aged 34) is a math teacher but currently stays at home with a small child. The next three participants (35 - 44 age group) are employed but only one needs to use a computer daily.

The last three participants (aged 45 - 55) had a diverse experience with IT skills - one had IT classes at a university in Afghanistan, one never had learnt on her own asking for others' help, and one has no experience with computers but wishes to attend a similar course. None of them is employed at this time. One is a caregiver to her disabled child, one is trying to get diploma recognition in the field of medicine but worries her Polish is not fluent enough to work as a doctor, and one is looking for a job for over a year now - she learnt to create a CV with the help of her friend.

In terms of digital government services, all interviewed declared it was very hard to learn the systems (e-taxes, ePuap, benefit application, schooling system - Librus) - only one had a positive experience learning by herself, and the others used the help of friends, children or somebody at city hall. They believe there should be a course teaching that because the instructions are not understandable and sometimes do not exist at all. The language barrier does not help either. Overall, using and trying to learn digital government services creates frustration and a feeling of dependency and hopelessness. On the other hand, online language training is perceived much more positively. Though only 5 out of 11 participants have any experience with those kinds of courses, all of them believe it is a very comfortable way of learning especially taking into



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account circumstances like being a prime caregiver to children, having mobility limitations, living with disabled persons who can not be left alone or simply being an introvert.

Apart from digital government services (mentioned by all) and online language training other topics arose. Though every woman we spoke with had slightly different needs, there were some recurring ideas about what would be most helpful. The majority of the 11 women surveyed were interested in developing skills related to finding work, creating a CV, and using office software and job search platforms like Pracuj.pl and LinkedIn. Additionally, many of the women mentioned the importance of gaining life skills such as easier planning of their arrival and first steps in the new country, gaining self-confidence, finding friends, and using e-banking. Several of the women also mentioned an interest in using Facebook and Instagram, as well as programmes needed for their children's schools such as Librus, Zoom, and Teams. Half of the interviewed women expressed interest in opening a business and mentioned needing knowledge of the law, graphic design, website development, and social media marketing. In terms of e-commerce, a few women mentioned their interest in using platforms like Booksy, Allegro, and OLX for buying products and services, but also advertise and sell on them. Meanwhile, some mentioned using WhatsApp and Telegram for communication and learning about YouTube and TikTok.

Among the challenges we learnt about standing in the way of efficient digital skills learning, we found: the need for childcare, not being able to leave the house, language problems and a lack of translation. These factors make it difficult to find the time and motivation to learn digital skills, especially when dealing with websites and programs that are not very intuitive. However, there are also significant opportunities associated with learning digital skills and migrant women are very aware of them. During interviews they mentioned: giving strength and self-reliance, increasing confidence to start a business, and allowing faster adaptation and integration into Polish society. On the list of advantages they also found: easier access to information, financial independence and feeling more at home. Overall, despite the challenges, the benefits of learning digital skills for TCN women are visible.

The topic of being digitally included has given us a minimal insight. Only three women perceived themselves as somewhat included - that means they are able to use communicators, translators, online maps, do online shopping, and to some extent find themselves a job or create a CV. They all believe that for many third-country nationals, the adaptation of systems to allow for online service provision would lead to increased access to essential support, more timely sharing of information and a greater sense of connectivity. Those who do not consider themselves to be included are women who have trouble accessing information or services they need, and most of all finding friends.



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3.4 Targeted consultation with selected key stakeholders

Targeted consultation with five key stakeholders had taken place in the form of individual meetings (on one occasion we had two participants in the interview) between the 9th and 25th of January 2023. The first consultation occurred on the 9th of January with Magdalena Kondas, Field Coordinator of MHPSS in the International Organization for Migration (IOM). IOM is an intergovernmental organization founded to help displaced persons after World War II. IOM works to help ensure the swift management of migration and to assist in the search for practical solutions to the problems of migrants and refugees.

The second consultation was conducted online on the 13th of January with Andrzej Zawieracz and Joanna Abramowicz from Fundacja Rozwoju Społeczeństwa Informacyjnego (eng. Information Society Development Foundation). Andrzej is the programme director of the foundation and Joanna is the coordinator of the vocational support program. The Foundation was established by the Polish-American Freedom Foundation - one of the largest grant-making organizations operating in Poland. As a result of FRSI projects, the foundation gained the unique experience of working in thousands of local communities all over Poland, in the area of social change and using new technologies. In 2023 FRSI started a professional support program for women from Ukraine "My Digital Life".

The third consultation happened online on the 24th of January with Paulina Ołtusek, Country Lead for Poland from INCO Academy. The organization is dedicated to creating training programs which provide equitable access to the knowledge and skills needed for high-opportunity jobs. Depending on the program, one can apply even without experience and knowledge of new technologies or with minimal programming knowledge and skills. All programs and activities are run online. At least 60% of the seats are dedicated to women.

The fourth meeting took place online on the 24th of January with Olena Dekhtiar, a Specialist in helping Ukrainian refugee women from Centrum Praw Kobiet (eng. Women's Rights Center). Throughout its existence, the Foundation has undertaken various activities, both on the national and international stage - with institutions such as the government and the Polish Parliament, the Council of Europe and the European Parliament. The Foundation has also collaborated with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and many other organizations dealing with women's rights. Due to the rising number of TCN women needing help, CPK opened units dedicated to migrant women.

The last consultation occurred on the 25th of January with Bartosz Domański, Coordinator of the municipality residence point for refugees from Warszawskie Centrum Pomocy Rodzinie (eng. Warsaw Family Support Center). The Warsaw Family Help Center is an organizational unit of the capital city of Warsaw established to carry out tasks in the field of social assistance. Due to the outbreak of the war in Ukraine - WCPR established residence points, where, among others, digital competence courses were held.



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In the experience of our stakeholders, the level of digital skills and knowledge of TCN women is quite varied. Yet the most needed are support and capacity building even if they already have well-developed skills. Partly because they suffer from a reduced sense of agency and self-confidence, often they do not consider previous work experience as relevant in a new country. Those however who do not possess many digital skills frequently lack all basic abilities in terms of using computers, starting with creating an email or CV, finding or buying anything.

The main challenges faced by TCN women wishing to develop their soft digital skills and enter the digital labor market are lack of individual support and lack of equipment - refugee women mainly use older smartphones, practically no laptops at all. This is particularly problematic in the case of people living outside the accommodation facilities (in the centers IOM sponsors computer rooms and distributes tablets to children). Women have no knowledge of applications needed to live in Poland, e.g. jakdojade (eng. how.will.i.get.there - application for public transport), Librus, government applications, better job search portals and often fall victim to scams and phishing. There is a problem with the online education of children, mothers are not familiar with online education tools, so they do not control the learning process of children who officially learn online in Ukrainian schools. Women who do not know the Polish language are therefore unable to check job offers. They also have poor knowledge of Polish job offers and standards. In this way, two different realities emerge - refugee women look for offers on Facebook or OLX, and Poles on Pracuj.pl and specialized portals, where there are better offers. There is a problem with making a CV, some women have never had contact with this type of document. Vocational advisors make such CVs, but the job seeker should be able to make a CV in Polish and be able to edit it. The next step could be to develop skills in running and advertising your own business on the Internet.

There is no more problem - online courses exclude the most computer-excluded people from the beginning. Refugees are reluctant to take courses where there is no interaction with real people - they need the support of a teacher who will tell them when they do something wrong, but also a supportive group of other migrant women. There is also a group of young women noticed by stakeholders, who manage working with the internet very well. For them, it is recommended to prepare courses on setting up an online business, and preparing advertising materials - photos and videos for further promotion of their businesses on social media.

Usually, the staff is already qualified for providing online training to TCN women. Caseworkers, educators and trainers help to operate the most important applications and government websites, supporting the organization of the payment of benefits for children and its banking service, as well as in the verification of job offers. However, most of the organizations express interest in having their staff build further capacities on providing digital education to TCN women, especially because there are not enough people trained in this area and this project could close that gap. In conclusion, the scope of our project was perceived as viable and important to develop.



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4. Selection of good practices

Presentation of the collection on local and national practices regarding the digital inclusion of TCN women in Poland. All practices referring to policies related to TCN women integration in the digital society and to effective digital capacity building programmes and initiatives.

Good Practice I	
Title of the good practice:	Course of computer usage
URL of the practice:	Facebook event
Location /geographical coverage:	Warsaw
Brief description of the practice (exact nature of problem it addressed):	Stationary digital classes from Google Workspace
Institution/ Organization/ Service provider/ Implementing agency	Ukraiński Dom (eng. Ukrainian House)
Target Group(s)/ Beneficiaries	For ukrainian-speaking migrant women
Assessed effectiveness of/ Contribution that the practice has made to the digital inclusion of TCN women, along with tangible and not tangible results that reached:	Every edition 20 migrant women receive skills for Google Workspace: Sheets, Docs and Slides. They enter the job market with well developed digital skills and practical knowledge.
What are the conditions (institutional, economic, social, and cultural) that need to be in place for the good practice to be successfully replicated for TCN women in the context of the DIGITS project?	Trainers must deeply understand the needs and culture of migrants they train. There must be an atmosphere of mutual learning and sharing experience. You will need computers and space where you can train your skills.
What are the elements of this practice which could be used in the DIGITS capacity building programme (PR2&PR3)?	Apart from all mentioned above, the promotion of a course in a traditional manner (word of mouth marketing, leaflets, working with one specific group of migrant women) is another good practice that could be taken away from this action.



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What are the possibilities of extending the good practice more widely?	The model is easy to implement so possibilities are endless.
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Good Practice II	
Title of the good practice:	My Digital Life
URL of the practice:	https://mydigitallife.pl/
Location /geographical coverage:	Online (Poland)
Brief description of the practice (exact nature of problem it addressed):	Providing individual help alongside with group classes with a goal to find a proper job for migrant women.
Institution/ Organization/ Service provider/ Implementing agency	Fundacja Rozwoju Społeczeństwa Informacyjnego (eng. Information Society Development Foundation)
Target Group(s)/ Beneficiaries	Migrant women
Assessed effectiveness of/ Contribution that the practice has made to the digital inclusion of TCN women, along with tangible and not tangible results that reached:	65 women (aged 30/40+) are to find a job within a 6-month period. First they offer 6 to 8 weeks of training, then the time is divided between looking for job opportunities and individual consultations.
What are the conditions (institutional, economic, social, and cultural) that need to be in place for the good practice to be successfully replicated for TCN women in the context of the DIGITS project?	A project like this one needs a heavy financing and good strategic partnerships - in this case those are: Upwardly Global and Microsoft.
What are the elements of this practice which could be used in the DIGITS capacity building programme (PR2&PR3)?	Individual approach, and training over an extended time period.
What are the possibilities of extending the good practice more widely?	There are possibilities of extending this practice more widely if found equally supportive partners.



Good Practice III	
Title of the good practice:	Digital skills in refugee residence point
URL of the practice:	There is no information about those actions outside of the residence point. Classes are for residents only.
Location /geographical coverage:	Various locations in Warsaw
Brief description of the practice (exact nature of problem it addressed):	Organizing two computer rooms in residence point - one for working online and training and the other for doing homework, playing games and using the internet. To promote digital skills, a women's rights organization was invited for a series of motivational/empowerment lectures.
Institution/ Organization/ Service provider/ Implementing agency	Warszawskie Centrum Pomocy Rodzinie (eng. Warsaw Family Support Center)
Target Group(s)/ Beneficiaries	Third country national community
Assessed effectiveness of/ Contribution that the practice has made to the digital inclusion of TCN women, along with tangible and not tangible results that reached:	In the residence point lives a few hundred people at all times. Usually people living there do not have a job or it is one of the least-paid jobs. Having opportunity to develop essential skills without leaving current place of living is extremely comfortable for eg. young mothers.
What are the conditions (institutional, economic, social, and cultural) that need to be in place for the good practice to be successfully replicated for TCN women in the context of the DIGITS project?	Finding the equipment to work on and a space where we could welcome women with children. Including empowerment lectures into our curriculum.
What are the elements of this practice which could be used in the DIGITS capacity building programme (PR2&PR3)?	As described above.
What are the possibilities of extending the good practice more widely?	Yes, but only in case of providing similar support (space for children and equipment to work on).

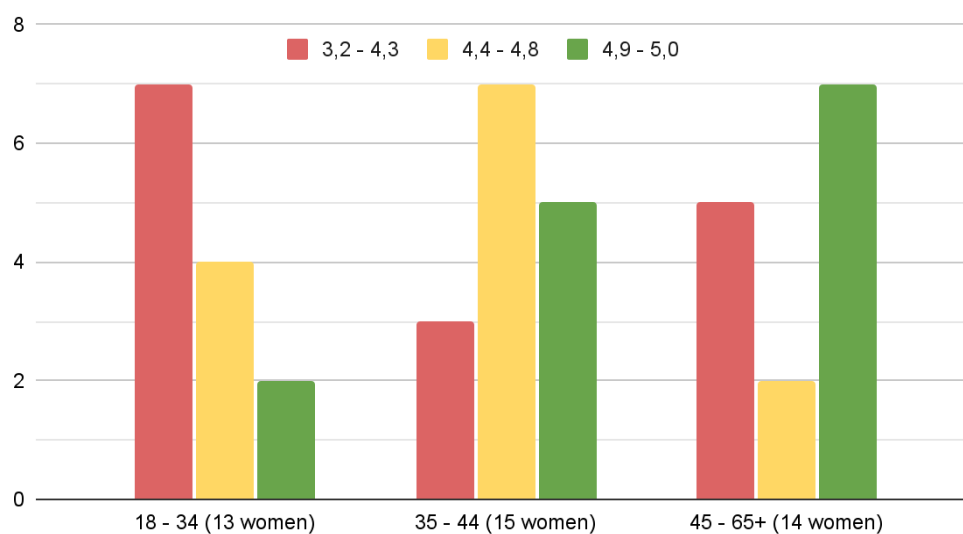


5. Conclusions and recommendations

As mentioned in the desk research, there are quite a lot of great opportunities spread all over Poland for migrant women to acquire digital skills. Due to the influx of refugees fleeing the war in Ukraine, there is a significant predominance of offers for Ukrainian women over others nationalities. However, this growing interest in providing training to one migrant group to some degree overflows into opportunities for others as well. Most programs concentrate on access to school, employment, information, and language training, which goes hand-in-hand with data about needs received during an online survey filled out by 42 women from Ukraine, Russia, Vietnam, Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Chechnya (out of which 53,8% were unemployed) and interviews held with 11 women from Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Chechnya, Belarus and Ukraine (out of which 72,7% were unemployed - some due to insufficient level of Polish, being the primary caregiver to someday at home, having health issues and others due to trouble with diploma recognition). There is however one topic grossly overlooked by most of the courses - everyday life challenges happening due to a lack of digital skills.

Two of the questions most connected to the essence of the project “12. How useful are the following digital skills in your life and career?” (with a scale of 1-5, where 1 means “completely useless” and 5 means “absolutely useful”) and “13. How much would you like to develop your digital skills in the following areas of everyday life?” (with a scale of 1-5, where 1 means “I wouldn’t like at all” and 5 means “I would like very much”) allowed us to combine data by comparing the average of scores given to in total 19 statements in above-mentioned questions. What we found is that the importance and perceived usefulness of digital skills has growing appreciation with older age groups - especially in the 45+ group.

Average from scores given in Q12 & Q13



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It is also interesting to note that the significant number of participants in interviews and survey were from the 18-24 and 25-34 age groups (31,0% of women filling out the survey and 45,5% of interviewed women), which suggests that they may be more likely to be actively engaged in digital technology topics and therefore have a higher level of digital competences.

All interviewed women declared that help with digital government services would be crucial to integrating into Polish society. Most would like to develop skills related to looking for a job, gaining life skills and self-confidence in this topic, finding friends, using social media platforms, and programmes needed for school education. Half expressed interest in building their own business. There are however challenges to be taken into account like the need for childcare during classes or language problems.

In the online survey, it was also found that areas of life where the highest willingness to develop digital skills was recorded were education and vocational training, then employment support and online financial transactions, followed by healthcare services and finally social services with cultural activities / entertainment.

For educators to be able to support TCN women on the journey to gaining new skills they must be able to fully communicate with them, work within core humanitarian standards and stay patient during classes. Individual approach is a necessity that can not be stressed enough, both with the ability to help with the process of group building.

Overall, the data collected from the participants provides a valuable starting point for the project. By conducting interviews and collecting data from educators and stakeholders we were able to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the existing digital skillset of third-country national women in Poland.



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