



NATIONAL INDEX

ACCESS 2 SUCCESS

DIGITAL PATHWAYS FOR ADULT
LEARNERS, MIGRANTS, AND REFUGEES





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National Index - Spain

**Access2Success: Digital Pathways for Adult Learners,
Migrants, and Refugees**

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INTRODUCTION

FEDELATINA (Federación de Entidades Latinoamericanas de Cataluña) is a network of associations in Catalonia that work for full access to citizenship for people of diverse origins, and the defense of their rights. FEDELATINA is made up of 47 entities and aims to provide services, assistance, and coordination to immigrants, returnees, and the associations that represent them.

The Access2Success project seeks to analyze the impact of the digital gap (or digital gaps) existing among the adult migrant population or those with a migration background. The mission of the project is to empower people of diverse origins with essential tools to promote digital competencies, foster digital literacy, and open a debate around concepts such as digital citizenship.

The following report shows the findings obtained from the study conducted in Spain by the FEDELATINA research team. Similar studies have been carried out in Germany by the organization Cultures Goes Europe; in Sweden by Goodness of People; and in Poland by Logos. Access2Success is a project funded by the European Union through the Erasmus+ Program: Key Action 2. Project number: 2023-1-SE01-KA210-ADU-000160557.

The Spanish Contexts

Spanish society has increased its digitalization process over the past decade. However, these technological and economic processes can intensify exclusion in certain sectors that cannot access or take advantage of the opportunities offered by technologies.

Spain's Digital Agenda 2026 is one of the pillars of the Recovery, Transformation, and Resilience Plan approved in 2021, which focuses on the country's digital transformation.

To achieve its objectives, plans such as the Digitalization Plan of Public Administrations (2021-2025) have been launched to improve the accessibility of public services for citizens. A crucial aspect of accessing digital services is secure authentication, exemplified by the DNle mobile project led by the Ministry of the Interior. This project allows for more accessible, agile, and secure access, verification, and handling of information. This initiative, along with other digital signature methods like the Digital Certificate, could represent an improvement by streamlining communication processes with the administration. However, it can become a barrier for migrants since having a Spanish DNI (National Identity Document) or, in the case of a Digital Certificate, a Foreigner Identity Card (TIE) is required. Additionally, the application and use of these tools may require certain technological skills that could exacerbate the digital and social gaps in some sectors.

FOCUS GROUP WITH ADULTS

METHODOLOGY



As part of the Access2Success project, the FEDELATINA Research Team conducted a focus group in Barcelona on January 9, 2024. The session lasted 70 minutes and included the participation of six adult migrants from diverse cultural and social backgrounds. The focus group addressed topics such as barriers to acquiring digital skills and digital citizenship for adult migrants.

Participant Profiles:

- AP. (Female, 67 years old, born in Venezuela).
- PM. (Female, 32 years old, born in Colombia).
- JP. (Male, 20 years old, born in Colombia).
- JG. (Male, 63 years old, born in Venezuela).
- AB. (Female, 33 years old, born in Argentina).
- DP. (Male, 32 years old, born in Argentina).

A second focus group was conducted with educators who work with adult migrants on January 30, 2024, lasting 8 minutes and 28 seconds. Additionally, an interview was conducted on January 31, 2024, lasting 3 minutes and 49 seconds, for a participant who was unable to attend the focus group.

The discussion centered around the perception of the digital gap affecting the educators or the adult migrants they work with, how organizations can help reduce this gap, and examples of the positive impact of reducing it.

Profiles of the educators involved in the focus group:

- A., female, educator offering courses for women at risk of social exclusion and adult migrants.
- E., male, educator providing digital skills courses to adult migrants.
- D., male, educator offering courses to adult migrants.

Profile of the interviewed educator:



L., male, educator and journalist conducting courses and workshops to combat misinformation on the internet.

KEY FINDINGS



Level of Digital Skill

Participants reported an intermediate level of technological proficiency, except for the older participants, who perceived themselves as having a lower-than-average level. Despite this, all participants acknowledged the importance of digital technology and its significant impact on both their professional and private lives. To learn more, they were asked about their preferred platforms and apps, which could be grouped into three categories: communication, entertainment, and utility.

Regarding communication services, participants highlighted LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram and Whatsapp, with WhatsApp being preferred over similar applications like Telegram. Regarding entertainment, participants mentioned YouTube, Spotify, Shazam (an app for identifying songs) and TikTok. TikTok, however, was noted with a negative connotation as a major source of misinformation and "a waste of time." Finally, concerning utility apps for everyday life, participants highlighted Google Maps, Google Keep, Duolingo, and banking apps, though banking apps were considered more as a necessity than a helpful tool. Additionally, AI services like ChatGPT were mentioned, described as "addictive" and "a one-way path."

However, accessing this technology is not always easy. Throughout the interview, various barriers that hinder the participants' use and interaction with the complex and growing digital world we live in were mentioned both explicitly and implicitly. Among all these barriers, age, culture, language, and education proved to be particularly significant.

Age is an important factor as young people have not only been born into a more digitalized world but also have had access to extensive formal and informal education targeted at them. This leaves older individuals at the mercy of the limited resources available to them, where information is perceived as scarce and confusing, and instructors, whether formal or informal (such as family members willing to help), are often seen as too impatient and lacking empathy for the learning pace of older adults.

Regarding culture and language, it must be considered that the vast majority of terms are of Anglo-Saxon origin, so not belonging to a culture where that language is spoken poses a disadvantage.

Similarly, and related to the previous point, older people tend to be less proficient in the English language, which makes certain terms sound foreign and more difficult to process. Whether it's due to their language proficiency or familiarity with specific terms, younger people have more educational opportunities in this area.

Finally, education is a barrier that was noted numerous times throughout the interview and, as we have seen, is closely related to other barriers. In addition to what was mentioned in other points, participants observed that technology advances at a frenetic pace and can be confusing if "you fall behind." This forces people to adopt a self-taught attitude of constant learning, –especially older people– which is made more complicated by the fact that access to learning resources already requires some skill in handling technology and networks. Fortunately, the education barrier is also the most easily alterable of the previous ones, and changing it could have a significant impact on users' ability to Access2Success.

Digital Citizenship

At the beginning of the second phase of the focus group, participants were asked if they knew the term "digital citizen" and/or what they thought it meant. AB and AP believed that being able to navigate technology was necessary and sufficient. DP, with a similar perspective, stated that a digital citizen is someone who uses technology in a way that it becomes part of their daily life. PM and JG, on the other hand, referred more to the concept of identity or presence in the digital world, which everyone in technological societies has, and which comes with certain rights. JP added to this idea by stating that digital citizenship not only involves rights but also individual responsibilities and digital ethics.

Throughout the focus group, various opinions about current and future technology emerged. Disinformation was a significant concern: among the vast amount of information we receive daily, erroneous or even malicious messages or ideas can slip through. Major sources of this disinformation are social networks, especially those that are based on mass entertainment like the previously mentioned TikTok, which not only can "waste your time" but also manipulate people's ideas and beliefs.

Technological advances quickly transition from conveniences to necessities.

It was previously mentioned how banking apps, for example, are increasingly seen as a necessity rather than a help. While it is true that technology facilitates many aspects of our lives, society has gradually adapted to it in such a way that living without it now seems impossible. Just as cars transitioned from facilitating travel to becoming almost mandatory products that have physically reshaped the world, with roads restricting non-automobile access, conducting banking transactions "the old-fashioned way" is becoming increasingly complex. This poses a particular problem when considering the growing inconveniences of living with technology in its current state.

Much of our information is available to anyone who wants to access it, whether through legal means or not. Within the group, concerns were raised about using Wi-Fi in public spaces due to fears of data theft, but these worries extend beyond just illegal practices.

Any website today can require the use of cookies to access its services, leaving your data in its databases for uses over which the individual has no control. And since technology is becoming a necessity, we cannot simply avoid it to protect ourselves: to live in society, you have to accept certain risks.

The risks we are exposed to and the unethical behaviors previously mentioned are worsened by the apparent lack of knowledge (or even existence) of individual rights concerning technology. To minimize these risks, the group proposed introducing subjects or even entire courses on technology rights and ethics that are accessible to the population.

Educate 2 Access

We return to the topic of education, one of the main themes throughout the focus group and potentially the cornerstone solution to this global issue. The group suggested the idea of public centers offering education on new technologies to people of all ages and technological abilities (including the younger generation, who are already adept at practical network use but more vulnerable to ethical dangers). These centers could offer various courses or workshops, ranging from using Chat GPT or navigating social media to understanding digital ethics and rights.

FOCUS GROUP WITH EDUCATORS

KEY FINDINGS



The educators who participated in this focus group acknowledged the existence of a digital gap from the outset. They mentioned that it's generational and multileveled, depending on the person's age and social context. Most of the people they've assisted already have some level of digital literacy, as these are individuals who have access to performing transactions and are capable of or know how to handle digital processes.

When discussing the contribution of organizations to reducing the digital gap, special emphasis was placed on the recognition of this gap. It's important to first acknowledge that one or more gaps exist to address the problem. A. pointed out that there is a common misconception that if people from low-income backgrounds have a smartphone, there is no digital gap; however, this is not true, as these individuals often lack basic technological knowledge.

It's important to note that the digital gap does not merely refer to having or not having digital tools or devices, but rather to the knowledge and skills to use these tools to make work or daily life easier. While it's true that organizations like Google provide digital literacy programs, we must consider that not everyone has the same social context, and therefore, the level of knowledge will differ among individuals. Ideally, digital literacy should be personalized.

D mentioned that the digital gap due to age is a problem for older adults who, not knowing how to use online banking, are charged for an in-person service that they could otherwise perform from the comfort of their home for free. These cases of abuse by some companies could be avoided by closing this digital gap.

Finally, the focus group participants shared examples of how improving digital skills and reducing the digital gap has positively impacted the people they work with and themselves as educators.

E mentioned that they've seen the positive impact of programs such as the one dedicated to unemployed women in Catalonia, where employability levels have increased after completing the provided training. Additionally, it has been observed that these digital skills have been useful not only in the IT sector but also in daily life. Similarly, D mentioned that the training they provide as educators is a source of empowerment and reconnection for people who've had previous contact with the digital world or possessed certain digital skills but had fallen behind due to life circumstances.

E and A agree that the intensive training they provide results in personal transformation for the students. Most of these students are migrants, and women, and come from disadvantaged backgrounds, which makes it more challenging to empower them and help them understand that they can access the same opportunities as more socially advantaged individuals by improving their digital skills.



RECOMMENDATIONS

It would be particularly important to organize workshops to develop basic skills for those less exposed to new technologies, such as older adults who haven't been as exposed to Anglo-Saxon culture and language. This way, each person could then access other sources of training and information.

Additionally, both educational and administrative staff (since they will be the ones making important long-term management decisions) must have a social perspective that adapts to the particularities of all potential students.

RECOMMENDATION:

Organize workshops for developing basic skills that can be easily found and accessed without relying too heavily on technology.

RECOMMENDATION:

Additionally, it would be ideal to hire patient and empathetic instructors for the most disadvantaged groups.

It is essential, especially for young adults, to have access to courses and classes that promote the responsible use of technology and instruct users in digital citizenship and cybersecurity.

RECOMMENDATION:

Organize courses that provide instruction in new technologies for all age groups, including courses and/or workshops on the ethical use of AI, social media navigation, and digital rights, among other topics.

RECOMMENDATION:

Establish official platforms that offer access to these concepts and content, enabling users to cross-check information and verify sources.

CASE STUDIES

INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores interviews with associations and schools that focus on developing digital competencies in adults from diverse backgrounds. We analyzed these discussions to present key ideas, including practices, challenges, and successes.

VERIFICAT:



Verificat is a non-profit association dedicated to combating misinformation and manipulation on the internet through journalism and education. It's the first fact-checking platform in Catalonia and the only one recognized by the International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN) and the European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO).

Verificat recently launched the Bridging Facts project, in which they plan to collaborate with organizations working with people from diverse backgrounds or vulnerable populations. Their goal is to provide workshops on digital literacy and fact-checking tools that can be replicated by trainers within their associations. The project seeks to train social workers and educators in these sectors to enhance their impact.

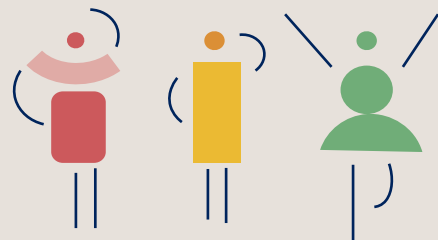


FACTORIA F5:



Factoría F5 is the first NGO in Spain dedicated to offering free training in programming and web development to people in vulnerable situations. Their methodology is based on the Simplon.co model, which consists of intensive, 100% practical training aimed at job placement. The workshops are supported by the PBL (Project-Based Learning) method, where projects are carried out collaboratively to constantly recreate the work environment.

The bootcamps have a high percentage of women, helping to feminize the sector, and include many immigrants, with some cohorts having more than 50% immigrant students. In specific bootcamps like Full Stack or Cloud, 100% of the students are immigrants, refugees, or asylum seekers. Factoría F5 aims to democratize access to a traditionally elitist sector that is often inaccessible to people with low resources or in vulnerable situations, providing tools for inclusion in the tech sector and thus increasing digital talent.

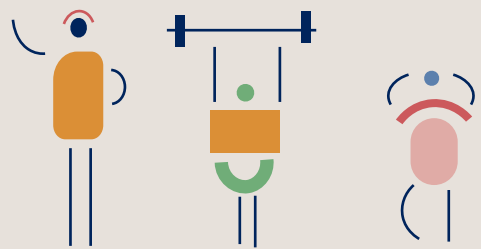


MAFE MONTILLA:



Mafe Montilla offers workshops focused on developing digital skills through the strategic use of social media. A digital marketing professional, Mafe emigrated from Colombia to Barcelona two years ago and has since established herself as a reference for many Latin Americans looking to grow their businesses on social media.

Since she arrived in Europe, she has focused on developing her brand and now has a community of over 40,000 followers. Mafe organizes free events where she shares her experience as a migrant and has recently started a business that provides training on how to start from scratch on social media, become an influencer, and create or position a personal brand, all aimed at the Latino community.



QUESTIONNAIRES

METHODOLOGY



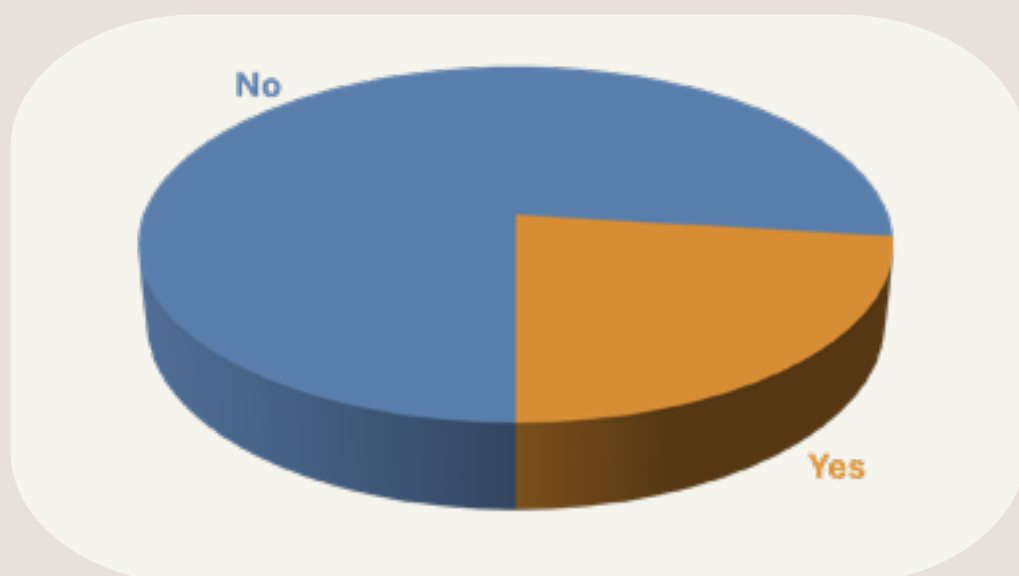
Two questionnaires were used to complement the information already obtained from the focus groups. The first questionnaire on Digital Citizenship included open-ended questions that allowed for exploring the understanding of the concept and related points. On the other hand, the second questionnaire was a self-report type, which provided deeper insights into the development of digital skills/competencies. Both questionnaires were administered to a diverse sample of young adult migrants.

DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP



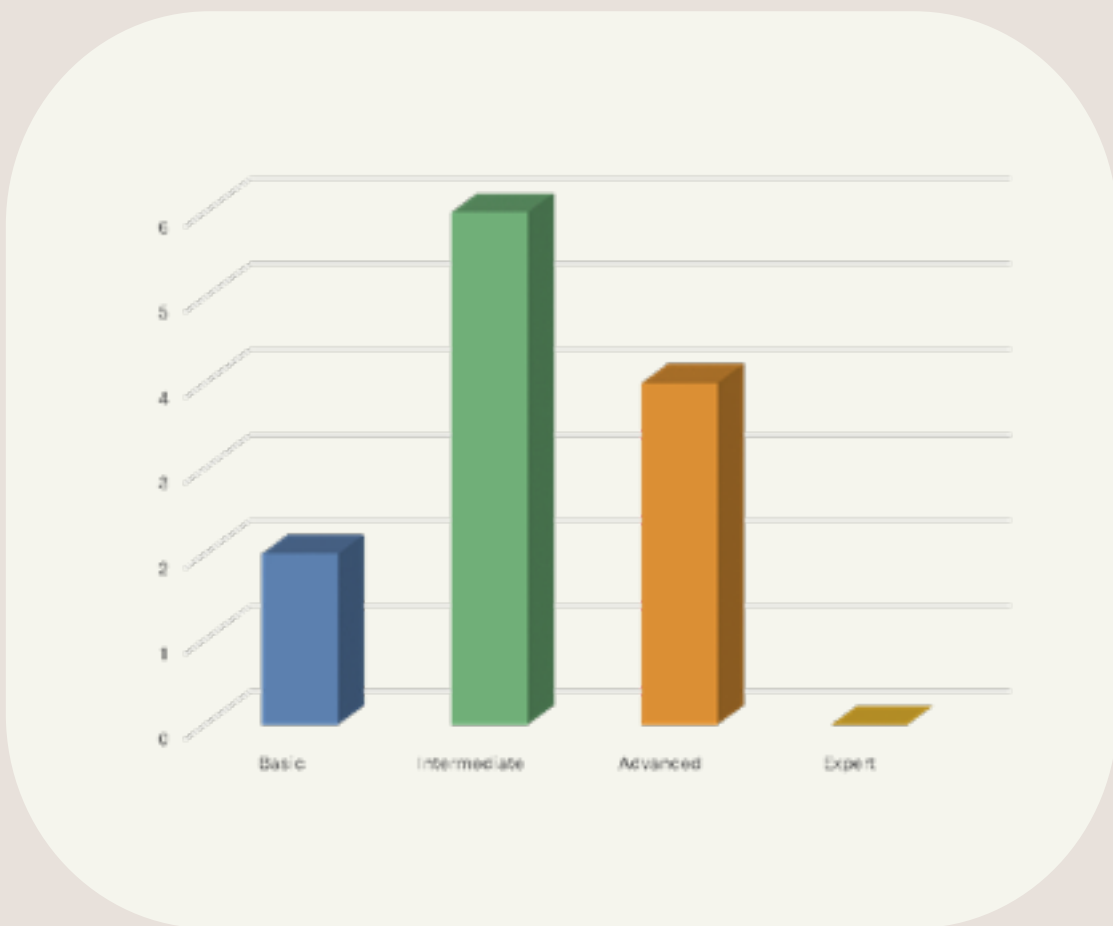
Regarding the Digital Citizenship questionnaire, it consisted of 20 open-ended questions. The sample included 13 participants, the majority of whom were women (8 women, 5 men), with an age range from 24 to 67 years, mostly young adults. The participants were from Latin American countries; five had been in Spain for 3 to 8 months, while the remaining five had been there for over a year.

According to the responses collected, the majority of participants were not familiar with the concept of digital citizenship and had not received training on the use of technology.



The majority of participants reported that they avoid participating in online forums and discussions, considering them to be contentious and not very serious. They agreed that the best way to seek and obtain information is by cross-checking sources and ensuring that the information comes from reliable places. Additionally, they recognized that they still had much to learn about the responsible use and best practices of digital tools. Most of their knowledge had been acquired empirically, driven by their curiosity and needs.

Their daily use allows them to have a basic to advanced understanding of digital tools, but the participants acknowledged that misinformation and lack of formal instruction prevent them from fully perfecting their digital skills to be considered experts.



-  BASIC
-  INTERMEDIATE
-  ADVANCE
-  EXPERT

DIGITAL COMPETENCIES

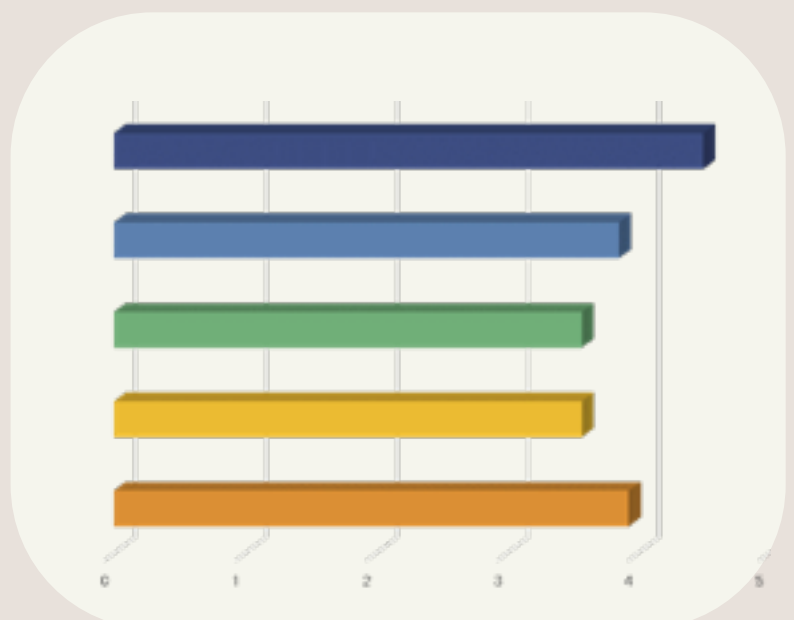
To delve deeper into the perception of digital competencies, a self-report questionnaire was administered to measure the level of digital skills/competencies.

This instrument covers five areas: Information and Data Literacy, Communication and Collaboration, Digital Content Creation, Safety, and Problem Solving. .

These areas allow participants to self-assess their skills in using technology (digital competencies). Each area evaluates the level of development of each participant's digital competencies, with levels ranging from 1 to 6, where level 3 is considered intermediate and level 5 and above as advanced.

The questionnaire was completed by 14 participants. 57% were women and 43% were men. **Overall, the group averaged an intermediate level (level 4) in the development of digital competencies. The most developed area for the group was Information and Data Literacy (level 5).** The bar graph shows the group's average level by area, with the group's average development remaining within the intermediate to advanced range.

- Information and data literacy
- Communication and collaboration
- Content creation
- Security
- Problems solving



CONCLUSION

We live in an ever-changing world, where technological innovations quickly become obsolete and are replaced by even more advanced and revolutionary ones. The problem with a society advancing at such a frenetic pace is that we barely have time to consider the long-term implications of these advancements or even the short-term ones.

Moreover, it's becoming increasingly difficult to remain unaffected by this issue or to withdraw and live with old customs, as these advancements, though designed to make life easier for those who adopt them, quickly become necessities. They reshape all aspects of social life around them.

Obviously, some individuals are more affected than others:

Some find it more challenging to adapt, especially those who weren't born into a globalized and technological world, who either don't belong to a culture where learning these skills is easy or don't have the resources to do so. It's crucial to emphasize that in recent years, the requirement for basic digital skills just to exist in society has intensified, and consequently, so has the need for access to the means to learn these skills.

However, we shouldn't only focus on those who struggle to adapt:

Young people, and all those who can easily grasp new advancements, deserve special attention. They're not only the most susceptible to falling into misinformation traps but also to creating them and using technology unethically.

For these reasons, it is crucial to design a plan to improve access to digital resources and enhance the quality and quantity of education in digital and technological matters. This includes offering courses on AI or social media to stay current, as well as courses on digital citizenship, rights, and ethics to equip tomorrow's world with individuals who are wiser, more conscious, and better prepared for success.

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Lastly, we gratefully acknowledge the support of the European Union through the Erasmus+ program, which funded this project. We also acknowledge the consortium assembled by FEDELATINA from Spain, Culture Goes Europe e.V. from Germany, Goodness of People from Sweden, and Logos from Poland for their collaboration and support throughout the research process.



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