



DESIGNING INCLUSIVE VET



RESULTS OF THE SURVEY ON AVAILABILITY OF DIGITAL OFFERS FOR PERSONS WITH SENSORY IMPAIRMENTS

conducted among European VET providers within the project “Designing an Inclusive VET - Creating guidelines for accessible digital VET programs for people with sensory impairment (DIVE)”



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INTRODUCTION

This survey was conducted as part of the project “Designing an Inclusive VET - Creating guidelines for accessible digital VET programs for people with sensory impairment (DIVE)” within the period of May until August 2023.

This purpose of the survey was to assess the availability of digital offers in the European educational landscape of Vocational Education and Training (VET) for people with sensory impairments and especially for the target group of deaf people. Through an online survey, multiple VET providers from several European countries, including Germany and Austria, were encouraged to take part. Additionally, we sought to understand the needs of the VET institutions in order to determine what aspects needed special attention and, above all, to create products in the course of the project that represent added value.

Specifically, the objectives of the survey were to:

- Identify a minimum of 20 VET providers offering online trainings from at least eight different EU member states through various channels, including networks, partnerships, and collaborations with organisations.
- Engage the identified VET providers from the beginning by already providing them with information about the project's objectives, processes, and anticipated outcomes.
- Develop a comprehensive online survey, that is inclusive in language, technology and methodology, as well as already create awareness in regard to the topic of the project.
- Define evaluation criteria for the survey.
- Seek advice and input from the academic expert of the University of Vienna to refine and finalize the survey questions, ensuring an inclusive and effective tool for assessment.

This multi-step approach was chosen to gather valuable insights into the current landscape of digital VET courses, focusing on accessibility and inclusivity across diverse VET providers across Europe.

By providing the summary of the collected data, the survey presents the current strengths and limitations of digital offers in the European VET area. We want to contribute to the ongoing discourse on creating more inclusive learning environments through digital means. The ultimate goal of the given survey and DIVE project, in general, is to make VET more accessible for everyone.

The results of the survey may serve as evidence base for educational institutions especially within the VET area, companies, decision-makers and policymakers willing to make VET training offers more inclusive and accessible to all.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As mentioned above, the survey was conducted between May and August 2023. To conduct the survey, an online questionnaire had been developed; it contained 15 questions (eight open questions and seven closed ones).

All in all, 21 organisations provided input to the survey, including eight small institutions, nine medium-sized organisations and four large companies. The number of learners catered for by these institutions varies broadly from 100 participants (three organisations) to more than 15000 persons (two institutions) annually. 13 out of 21 respondents reported that they employed persons with disabilities themselves.

Regarding the participation of persons with hearing impairments in digital course offers provided by mentioned organisations, only four of the respondents confirmed that they had persons with hearing impairments among their learners. At the same time, few of those respondents could specify how big this group was (only one person reported they had approx. 5 participants with hearing impairments per year).

When asked what kind of supporting tools for persons with hearing impairments were employed, the most common answers were: subtitles, transcripts, chat function, and special headphones.

The second part of the survey was dedicated to the needs of VET institutions regarding the provision and delivery of inclusive and accessible digital training offers. 19 out of 21 respondents stated a comprehensive booklet/guide would be of significant help in this matter. Other kinds of support mentioned were as follows:

- Tools, teaching styles, examples and learning environments suitable for persons with hearing impairments;
- Information about individual needs of deaf persons and instructions how to provide adequate support to them;
- A checklist to ensure the accessibility of digital material;
- Guidance on creating digital content and e-learnings accessible to persons with hearing impairments;

It can be stated that the majority of respondents who took part in the survey have little understanding how many persons with hearing impairments (if any) take part in their

courses. The main reason for this could be that addressing the needs of this target group does not belong to the priorities of those institutions. Consequently, the current training programmes are not being adapted to become more inclusive and accessible to persons with hearing impairments, and no new programmes meant specifically for this group are developed. Even if there is an intention to broaden the scope of existing (digital) training offers to include deaf people, there is little awareness about their needs and insufficient understanding how these can be met didactically, methodologically, technically, etc.

Thus, the results of this survey clearly show the relevance of the DIVE project and similar initiatives, and the urgency to further educate VET providers and other training institutions on the needs of persons with sensory impairments. Zeigen Sie dieses Dokument in Word auf Ihrem Computer, Tablet oder Smartphone an, und bearbeiten Sie es. Sie können Text bearbeiten, Inhalte wie Bilder, Formen und Tabellen auf einfache Weise einfügen und das Dokument aus Word auf Ihrem Windows-, Mac-, Android- oder iOS-Gerät nahtlos in der Cloud speichern.

SURVEY RESULTS

Background information

The following document presents the survey results for the survey phase within the Erasmus+ project DIVE, which were obtained by the partner consortium (brainymotion AG and ibis acam Bildungs GmbH) within the time of May till August 2023.

Below the structure and the profile of respondents is presented:

The survey questionnaire consisted of:

- 15 questions in total
- 8 open questions
- 7 closed questions

In total we collected answers from:

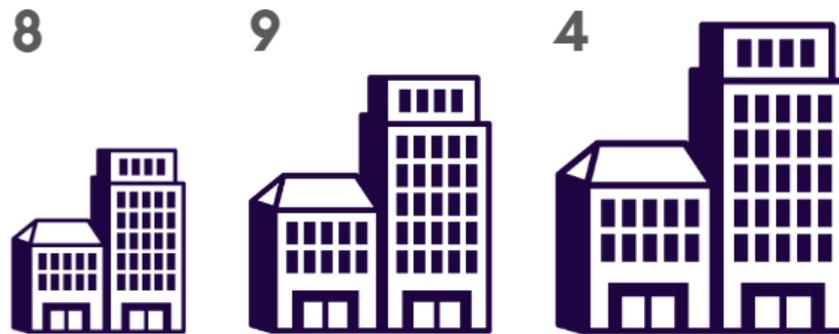
- 21 participants
- Persons in functions associated in the area of VET
- From all over Europe but at least from 9 different countries (Ireland, Spain, France, Germany, Austria, Greece, Slovenia, Italy, Finland)



For this survey phase, we have collected data from companies that are:

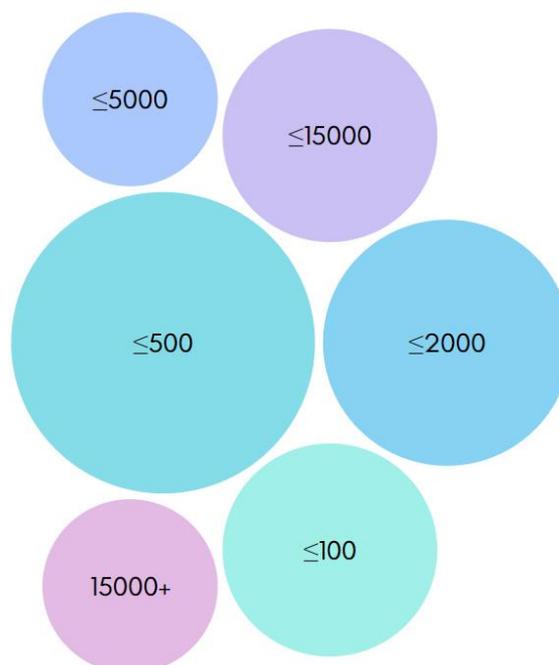
- Small organisations: 8

- Medium-sized organisations: 9
- Large organisations: 4



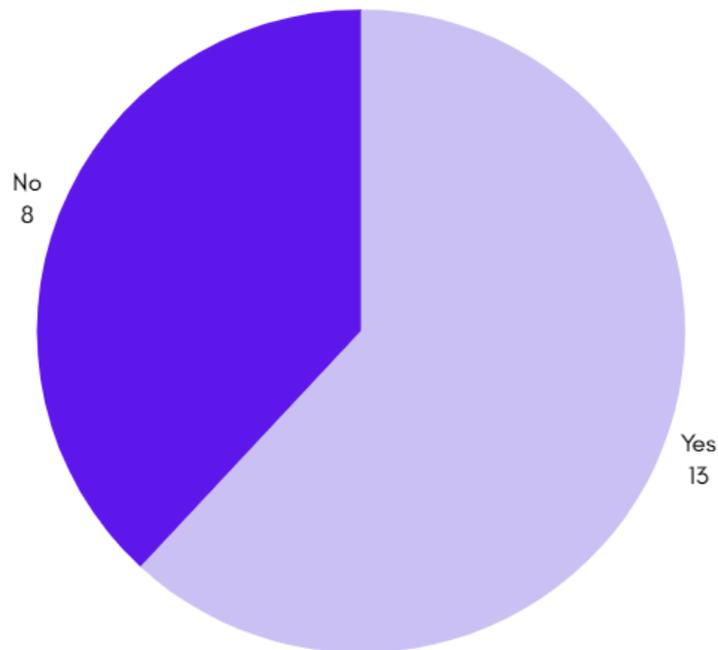
The number of participants that attend trainings at the asked organisations each year, range from:

- Under 100 participants: 3 organisations
- 100- 500 participants: 6 organisations
- 500 - 2000 participants: 4 organisations
- 2000 - 5000 participants: 2 organisations
- 5000 - 150000 participants: 3 organisations
- More than 15000 participants: 2 organisations



When we asked the organisations, if they employ people with disabilities, the answered as followed:

- Yes: 13
- No: 8



When asked how many people with disabilities they employ themselves in their organisations, they answered as followed:

- No answer given: 8
- Did not know: 2
- 5 and below: 7
- 10 and below: 1
- 20 and more: 2
- Another person stated 10% of their staff

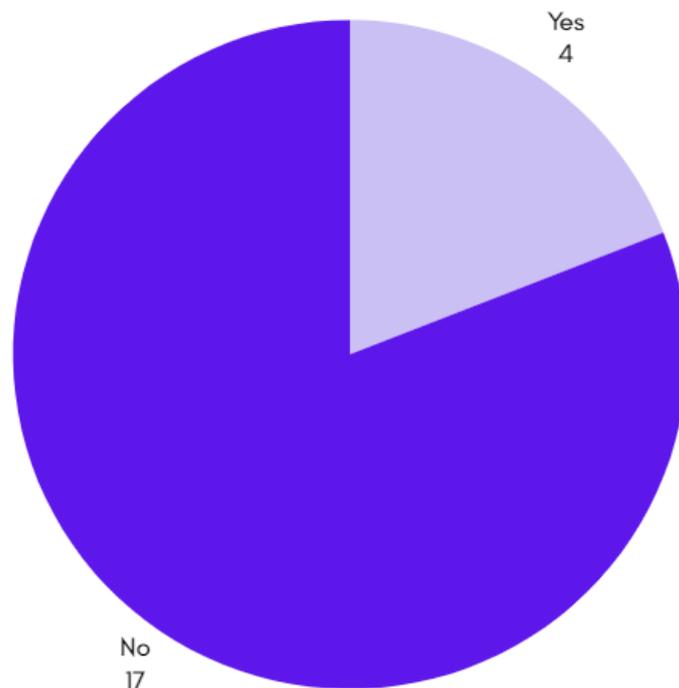
Current conditions in the organisations

The given section presents an excerpt of the questions of the second part of survey in regard to the current conditions in the organisation.

Q5: Do people with hearing impairments currently take advantage of your (digital) course offerings?

The answers in the survey were as followed:

- Yes: 4
- No: 17



Q6: Please indicate how many individuals with hearing impairments attend your course offerings on average each year?

The answers in the survey were as followed:

- No answers given: 17
- Did not know: 3
- One organisation reported: approx. 5 participants per year

Q8: Please briefly explain what information, if any, you have regarding the support provided to participants with hearing impairments?

The answers in the survey were as followed:

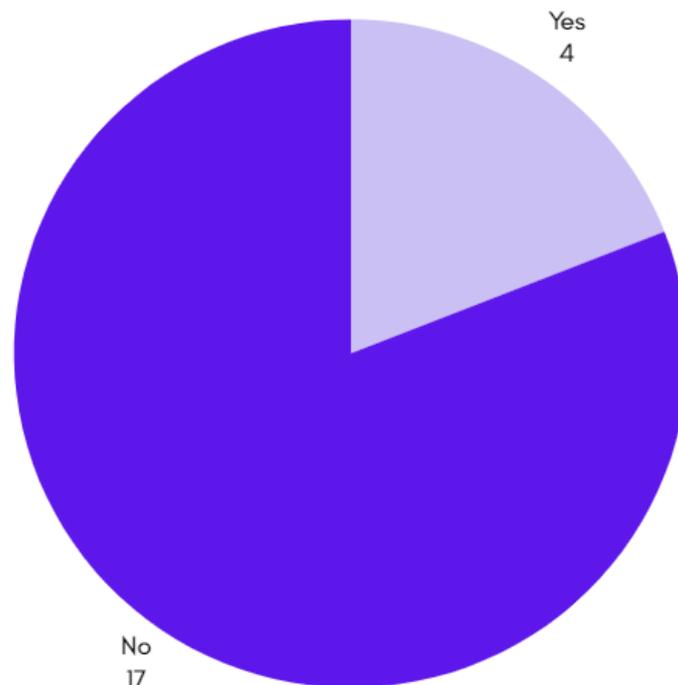
- No information: 9 organisations
- Not applicable: 3 organisations
- Use of subtitles: 4 organisations
- Use of transcripts: 1 organisation
- Use of chat function: 1 organisation
- Use of special headphones: 1 organisation
- 1 organisation answered that participants stated to wish more for individual support

1 organisation answered that they do not know if participants would need more support in that regard as they think that participants already dispose knowledge of the tools they would need themselves. Furthermore, in the creation of their online courses and material, they comply with the EU standards and thus have the impression of working already inclusive.

Q9: Do you have special offerings in your courses for persons with hearing impairments?

The answers in the survey were as followed:

- Yes: 4
- No: 17



Q11: Please briefly explain exactly which offerings you have and name the specific course content?

The answers in the survey were as followed:

- No answers given: 17
- Use of subtitles: 3 organisations
- Use of subtitles and more assisting tools such as automatic generated notes and additional support in form of text (meeting summaries, action items as texts): 1 organisation.

Summary

It can be stated, that the (digital) services for persons with hearing impairments in the field of European VET are still very few or non-existent. Most of the participating organisations possess little knowledge about, if or how many persons with hearing impairments are attending their courses. In addition, many organisations (81%) stated to not have specific offers for persons with hearing impairments attending their courses. Moreover, it seems that the responsible persons in the organisations often have no knowledge of whether a specific offer is needed or whether people would like to take advantage of it. If the organisations dispose over digital offerings for persons with hearing impairments, it is currently mostly in the form of written texts like subtitles, transcripts or using the chat function. Some organisations would also rely on the participants to know for themselves, which adequate assisting tools they would need in order to follow the course schedule

Current needs in the organisations

The given section presents an excerpt of the questions of the second part of survey in regards to the needs of the organisation.

Q12: Do you feel a booklet/ guide for creating digital offerings for individuals with hearing impairments would be helpful for the organisation?

The answers in the survey were as followed:

- Yes: 19
- No: 2

Q13: What support do you need to ensure that persons with hearing impairments can participate appropriately in digital coursework?

The answers in the survey were as followed:

- No answers given: 4
- “maybe suggestions on potential tools to be implemented for teachers during training sessions”
- “Information and guidance on what kind of support participants with hearing impairments need”
- “simple and concise information for our staff members about the best subtitle applications, the functions and requirements of the screen reading programs. It would be helpful to have a checklist which could be used ensuring the accessibility of digital material”
- “support on how to make digital content, E-Learnings, accessible for persons with hearing impairments”
- “More information about individual needs”
- “guidance on tools, teaching style, examples, learning environment”

Summary

It can be stated that most organisations (90%) perceive a booklet or guide as helpful for their daily course work. When asking for the specific offers they would need to enable people to appropriately follow their courses, the given answers show that in general they wish for more

guidance. Here, some of the organisations specifically mentioned their staff (foremost their teaching staff) to receive guidance on which digital assisting tools they could implement in their courses as well as to get more sensibilized for the needs of persons with hearing impairments. In addition, the organisations wish for more concrete and concise information and examples that they can implement - here they expressed examples such as a checklist to follow or a guide on how to develop a more inclusive eLearning or digital materials.

In the feedback section, most of the organisations had nothing to add but expressed their support regarding this topic.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

For this survey, we have contacted various organisations operating within the VET area in Europe. The size of the organisations ranged from small to large enterprises, which work with a number of participants below a 100 and up to 25.000 participants per year. More than half of the organisations (61%) stated to employ persons with disabilities. Currently 19% of these organisations have persons with hearing impairments taking part in their courses.

It can be stated that in the VET area, many of these organisations seem to have insufficient quantitative and qualitative data regarding the course experience of persons with hearing impairments. They often do not dispose sufficient knowledge about it if persons with hearing impairments attend their courses, how many and if they have expressed a need for a better infrastructure.

What the organisations seem to have in common is, that none of these organisations are now able to provide a sufficient and user-friendly digital course experience to persons with hearing impairments.

It also appears that some of these organisations do not feel the need to act in this direction because they do not have the impression that persons with hearing impairments are seeking to take part in their courses. However, the question arises here, if there is no need for such offerings or if these offerings would be welcomed and accepted if they existed and thus more persons with hearing impairments could attend the courses.

It also seems that, for organisations the most known and accessible assisting digital tool to support persons with hearing impairments is the function of using subtitles. This is also due to the fact that most existing videoconference tools offer this function as a standard setting and that most of the teachers or staff members know it or have made use of it themselves. It can be stated that if organisations are offering assistance to people with hearing impairments, it is in form of various text formats like e.g. subtitles, transcripts, additional summaries or the chat function.

It seems that organisations are overwhelmed with existing information or with the perceived lack of it. When asking about the needs of the organisations in order to implement more inclusive digital courses, there was a wish for simple and concise information as well as concrete examples.

However, there seems to be an understanding that even though we generally speak of persons with hearing impairments, this it is a diverse group of people with individual needs. To cater for these individual needs, the organisations would like to receive more information and examples.

The results of this survey also indicate that there is still a lack of understanding on how to incorporate persons with hearing impairments adequately in the daily course routine and create an environment that is suitable and comfortable for all participants.

Thus, our findings clearly demonstrate that there is a need for creating clear and concise guidelines on how to create more inclusive digital offerings for VET organisations all over Europe. We therefore see ourselves confirmed that there is a great need for this project and its results.