

DIGITAL SKILLSHIFT

Final Evaluation Report

May 2021
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With the support of
J.P.Morgan



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Executive Summary

This is the Final Evaluation Report for the Digital SkillShift learning programme led by ALL DIGITAL, with the support of J.P. Morgan.

The purpose of the project designed and implemented between 2019 and 2021 was to reskill and upskill individuals who are 'far' from the labour market and facing the challenges of the digital transformation in their career. The aim was to enable new work-related opportunities for the beneficiaries of the training, by developing new skills and attitudes required in today's labour market.

The project strove to create a training that would help individuals far from the labour market up-skill themselves with digital competencies that are relevant to employers. During the project design phase partners worked with employers to measure what digital assistance employers need and to encourage a new way of thinking about employment and recruitment. The project had envisioned maintaining employers' engagement throughout the lifetime of the project. This was not achieved as employers were more difficult to access during the lockdown periods. There were significant challenges faced in reaching employers during the pandemic period. Further work into digital outreach to employers should be prioritized in future trainings. Despite these challenges, a portion of training participants reported using the skills they developed in the training to help them access new work opportunities.

The programme was implemented by experienced local partners in three EU countries through the application of Open Educational Resources. Implementing partners supported participants in developing new digital skills and professional competencies required to succeed in today's labour market by designing the curricula and delivering the training. These skills were developed through the use of open source resources, as well as the experience offered by the implementing partners. The materials were adapted by each implementing partner to fit the regional contexts and the requirements of the participants. This effort was very well received. It was found that the broad range of topics included in the curriculum, while helpful in creating a wholistic learning experience that spanned the full project cycle, was a limiting factor for some participants. Trainers and participants alike commented that the curriculum would benefit from being divided into different more specific courses.

Course completion rates were highest for the French implementing partner, with a near perfect completion score. This is likely because the French program was organized in cooperation with a national employment agency that provided addition funding to the training and participants. The German and Italian partners had 60-70% course completion rates, however participants from these groups also reported having to discontinue the course due to work pressure or changes in their personal circumstance, such as illness. Overall course feedback was broadly positive as participants reported feeling the training helped them to develop more confidence and competence with digital skills and modern work modalities. These outcomes showed similar trends across all three implementing partners, showing that the methodology for course implementation was sound. An additional goal of the partners was to supporting participants in finding job opportunities, this goal was not reached.

This report documents the progress made through the development of the training programme and piloting. It will provide an overview of the initial project implementation strategy, the way in which partners adapted the implementation methodology to adapt to local contexts, challenges faced during implementation, outcomes, case studies and project cost analysis. All data included in this report is available upon request to ALL DIGITAL and project evaluators.



Project Response to COVID-19

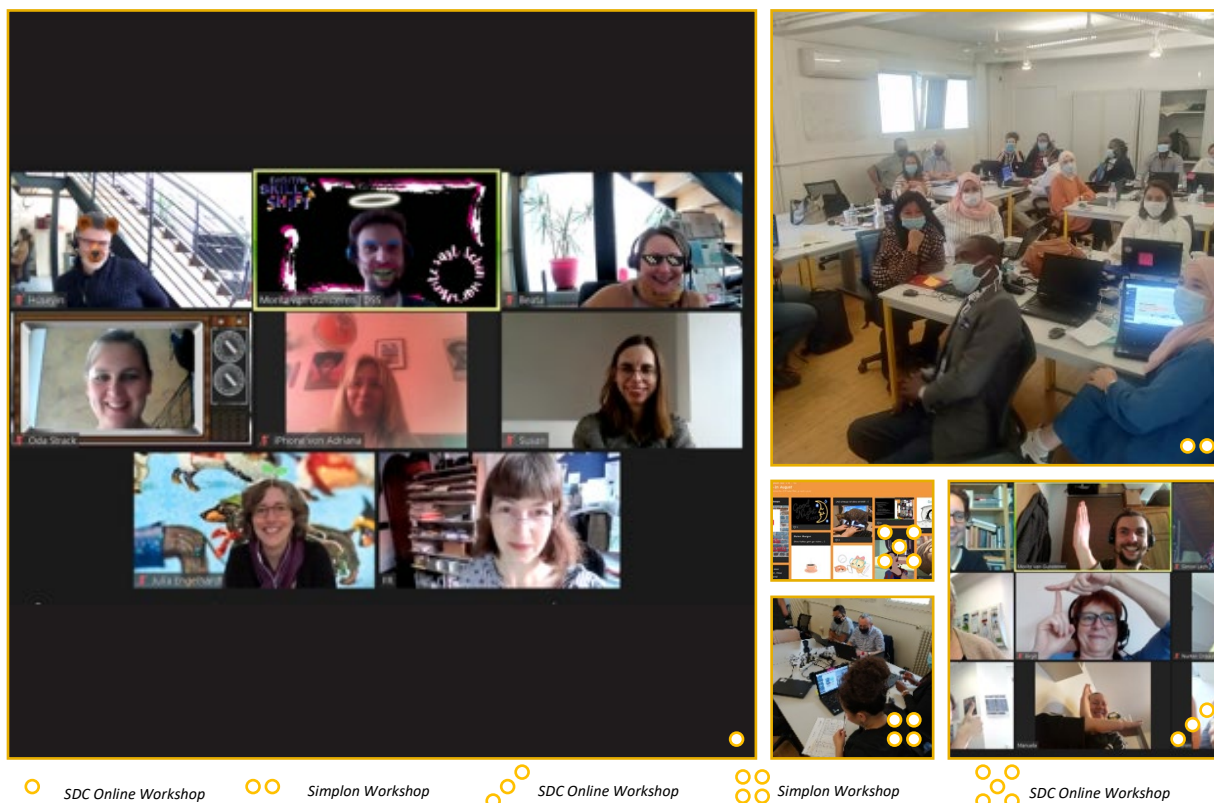
In March 2020 the outbreak of the novel coronavirus across Europe forced all partners to stop the operation of the face-to-face component of the Digital SkillShift training. The Italian partners had launched one pilot activity with 15 learners in early February 2020 before the lockdown was enacted, the rest of the pilot activities for the German and Italian partners were transitioned to a fully digital implementation. The French partners were able to re-launch face to face (F2F) activities in July 2020 due to provisions set out by the French government for professional training for individuals who are far from the labour market. The project has worked to adapt the programme curriculum to the conditions imposed by the pandemic.

Partners were reactive and willing to adapt their original training methodology, seizing the opportunity for practical learning by using the digital tools included in the curriculum to implement the course itself. One major change for the German and Italian partners was the creation of cohesive digital working groups that collaborated to complete projects virtually, instead of completing activities together during F2F course time.

Recruitment of programme participants was significantly affected by the disruption but was resumed in May and June 2020. Italian and German partners reported that their recruitment of participants had shown improvement from the initial decline in March before being halted again by a second wave of lockdown protocols in October.

Partners reported encountering some difficulty with participants not having access to a device (PC, tablet), not having access to a reliable internet connection, or having a suitable learning environment at home. One issue described by partners was that participants would often be sharing one device among multiple family members, making access more limited.

The economic implications of Covid-19 significantly impacted partners' ability to place trainees into work placements or jobs after the training was completed. Recruitment fell below the target rates in all three countries as job placements were not seen to be a priority for companies trying to adapt to the 'new normal' of working through the pandemic. The OECD¹ has reported that the impacts of the pandemic has triggered an economic depression equal to that of the great depression for all three implementing partner countries.



¹ OECD (2020) Employment Outlook 2020 – Facing the jobs crisis. [Accessed on January 21, 2021] <http://www.oecd.org/employment-outlook/2020/>

The Digital Assistant

The project consortium reviewed its assumptions and proposals with respect to the target audience, job opportunities and targeted skills and competences at the beginning of the project to develop the curriculum and the role of the Digital Assistant. Several methods (survey, focus groups, desk research, primary research, and partner experience) were used to explore whether the assumptions and proposals were valid. These findings were used in the development and delivery of resources.

An online survey was designed to explore a range of assertions about: the likely target employers and sectors; how they are affected by 'digital disruption'; and the job opportunities, skills, tools and desired learning outcomes associated with that disruption. A total of 46 completions of the survey were achieved during the five-week duration of the survey being live with an even balance across the three countries. There was a wide spread across sectors; a majority of SMEs but a significant number of larger employers (almost one quarter were 250+, and a third were 100 employees or more). Around 60% had been operating for more than 10 years, with almost 30% in operation longer than 20 years. 90% were in urban areas. *See Annex 1: Employer Survey Questions and Results*

The findings from the survey, focus groups, desk research, partners primary research and partner experience, confirm our initial thinking, and provide some valuable direction and focus for the development phase. The collective findings can be summarised as follows:

- Level: "entry level" – basic functional ICT skills must be in place, but the training will give candidates a 'digital transformation' mindset in addition to the specific role competences
- Sectors: all sectors (except ICT sector) across both larger companies and SMEs
- Learning Content: modular learning materials with core of content and task-oriented approach.

The curriculum aimed to give participants the skills to be a flexible and proactive worker who can support the project team at all stages of a project life-cycle regardless of company size or working sector. The curriculum did this by structuring the course to empower participants to be able to use online collaboration tools and platforms, design and/or select contents and services to facilitate project management tasks, research and training activities, as well as implementing communication and dissemination plan and strategies.

The Curriculum

The curriculum used the European Commission's Digital Competence Framework (DigComp²) to guide the curriculum design. The training was designed to focus on 2 areas of core digital competencies, communication and collaboration. The curriculum employed the use of the cooperative learning methodology³ to guide students through subjects with a variety of activities requiring students to create, analyse and apply concepts throughout a series of steps.

Area	Competence Unit	Learning Outcomes	DigiComp Reference
Introduction	The project life-cycle and the role of the digital assistant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain the structure of the project life-cycle and how different organizational roles are related to each single phase Recognize the main duties of the project digital assistant and explain the interrelations with other organizational roles 	N/A
	Effective teamwork strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Being an effective team member to positively impact on the quality of project related activities 	N/A
Collaboration	Communication in the working environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate more effectively and efficiently in the workplace 	N/A
	Collaborating through digital channels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set up and operate an online project collaboration space for a team or a project Using online documents and tools for a more efficient collaboration of the project team Facilitate the project management with online monitoring and team working tools Using the most appropriate service for a smooth and stable online communication 	2.4
	Interacting through technologies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Selecting the most appropriate social media for the implementation of online communication strategies Create and format online registration forms Create online surveys to specified formats 	2.1
Communication	Sharing information and content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Edit and amend existing websites in WordPress Create and format an online blog article Publish and manage posts on social media 	2.2
	Developing content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design graphic asset and select online graphic resources Format newsletters to specified formats Create reports and infographics Create engaging and interactive promotional presentations 	3.1

By the end of the training the participants were able to competently access information online and form personal information strategies, identify and solve problems with the help of digital tools, assess personal needs and match them with digital solutions, be able to effectively, safely, and respectfully operate in online spaces, and create, adapt and manage one or multiple digital identities.

The partners reported that the training curriculum was easy to adapt to a fully online implementation model. The German partners added additional content while adapting the course materials for the fully digital implementation.⁴

² <https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/digcomp/digital-competence-framework>

³ Hsiung, C. (2013) The Effectiveness of Cooperative Learning, The Research Journal for Engineering Education, 101(1), pg. 119-137.

⁴ Learn.digitalskillshift.eu

Each partner took a slightly different learning methodology for course implementation. The dominant distinction between the three groups was that the French partner continued their course implementation face to face, taking a very personal approach with the students with a focus on building self-confidence and reducing sources of anxiety around using digital tools.

The Italian partner used a flipped learning methodology, which had participants review materials such as articles and videos in advance of the training sessions, using class time for live problem solving.

	France	Italy	Germany
Content	Group work, peer learning, learning by doing	Flipped Classroom, group work, self-learning	Group work, project-based learning, learning by doing, self-learning
Period	4 weeks	4 weeks	3 weeks
Duration	140 hours	60 hours	60 hours
Frequency	daily	12 sessions	6 session
Location	On-site	Online	Online
Digital Tool	Simplon learning platform	Moodle	Moodle, Zoom & Padlet

Course Overview						
	France	Italy			Germany	
Week 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction Personality Test Project for the course 	Session 1 Introduction Project work	Session 2 Collaboration	Session 3 Teamwork workshop Part I	Session 1 Introduction Project work	Session 2 Collaboration
Week 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital tools watch Tree Skills Canva & CMS & Excel 	Session 3 Social Media	Session 4 Word Press	Session 6 Interacting with digital tools lab Part II	Session 3 Social Media	Session 4 Word Press
Week 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital tools watch Exam preparation LinkedIn & Design tools & HTML & CSS 	Session 5 Canva	Session 5 Presentations Kahoot Test	Session 9 Sharing information in the digital world lab Part I	Session 5 Canva	Session 5 Presentations Kahoot Test
Week 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital tools watch Exam preparation Use of the learned tools in the project 	Session 10 Sharing information in the digital world lab Part II	Session 11 Developing digital content lab Part I	Session 12 Developing digital content lab Part II		

Digital Learning Platforms

Overall, the platforms both offered a similar experience to the learner and was not found to have a significant impact on the learning outcomes. The foundation learning methodology was developed in a way that would allow it to be adapted a diverse range of learning platforms. In the following section, we will examine each platform differently and point out whether the use of the platform coincides with the piloting details presented by each platform.

DIGITAL SKILLSHIFT Learning Platform (Learn.digitalskillshift.eu)	Simplon Learning Platform (Simplonline.co)
Germany, Italy	France
Customized Moodle Portal (free and open source software)	An existent learning platform adapted to implement the DIGITAL SKILLSHIFT learning methodology

The DIGITAL SKILLSHIFT Learning Platform

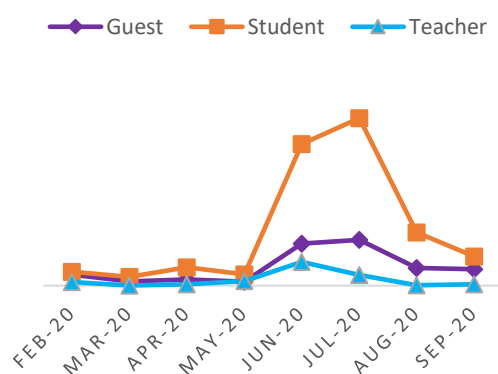


Figure 1 - DSS Activity Logs for all roles

The DIGITAL SKILLSHIFT learning platform was the cornerstone of the DIGITAL SKILLSHIFT pilot training. The usage trends for both roles (trainers and trainee) clearly corresponded with piloting reports and interviews with the implementing partners.

The monthly course logs also corresponded to the implementation of pilots for the Italian and German pilots.

The Simplon Learning Platform

The Simplon trainees worked independently on "project briefs". The trainers help them to solve learning problems that they would not have overcome individually.

The trainers indicated on the Simplonline.co platform what skills the trainees had acquired. The trainees could then view and follow their own skill development path.

Italian Training Beneficiary Demographics

[Patrizio Paoletti Foundation](#) operated four rounds of piloting exercises for 108 participants between February and December 2020. The first round of piloting activity began with 15 participants. The second round of piloting, launched online on June 8, began with 33 participants. The third round of piloting, launched online on June 22, started with 37 participants. The fourth rounds of piloting, launched online on November 9, began with 23 participants. Participants were asked to complete a brief survey at the beginning and end of their training course. The below findings were collected from the participant entry questionnaire. The Entry and Exit questionnaires are available in Annexes 1 and 2.

Participant ages ranged between 19 and 40, with 44% between the ages of 25 and 29, and 37% between the ages of 30 and 34. (Figure 2) 75% of the participants were female.

The majority of participants completed university (54%) training. Only one participant reported just having an elementary level of education. (Figure 3) 75% of participants reported being unemployed, 12% participants reported being under-employed, 6% reported being partially employed, and 7% of participants reported being fully employed.

The above elements demonstrate that the Italian partner (and training pilot) managed to reach the targeted audience of adults who are far from the labour market. In particular, **the percentage of women participating in trainings is quite encouraging.**

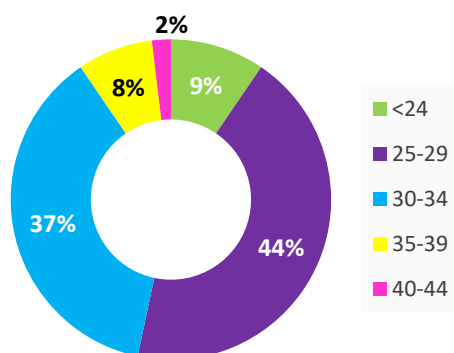


Figure 3 - Age of Learner

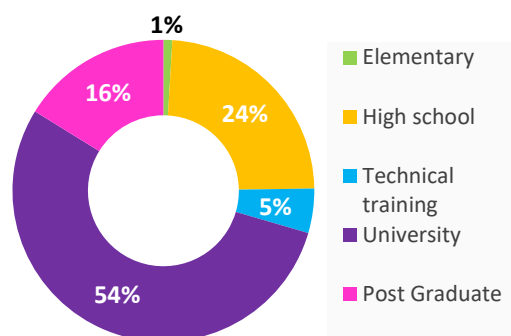


Figure 2 - Level of education attained

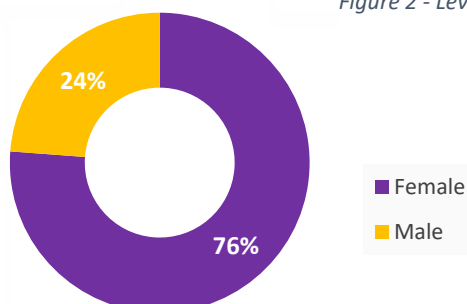


Figure 4 - Participant Gender

77 participants completed the full training programme operated by [Patrizio Paoletti Foundation](#). 73.3% (11) participants completed the first training course. 78.8% (26) completed the second training course. 62.1% (23) participants completed the third training course. 73.9% (17) participants completed the fourth training course. (Figure 5)

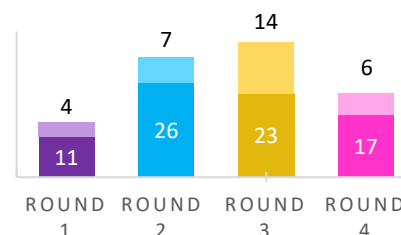


Figure 5 - Course completion rate

The following findings were gathered from participants upon completing the training course. 46% of learners who completed the training were between the ages of 25 and 29, and 36% were between the ages of 30 and 24. (Figure 8) 72% of the participants who completed the training are female. (Figure 7) This demonstrates that the percentage of women participating and completing training remained positive.

The majority of participants that completed the training had completed university (62%). (Figure 6) 77% of participants reported being unemployed, 13% participants reported being underemployed, 5% reporting being partially employed, and 5% reporting being fully employed. There was a 2% increase in the percentage of participants who reported being unemployed in the exit response survey when compared to the entrance survey. A report from the OECD on the Italian worker security and the Covid-19 crisis showed that Italy was one of the OECD countries most affected by the economic impacts of COVID-19, with a 4% increase in unemployment from February 2020 to May 2020, and a decrease in online job postings of 30% in the same period.⁵

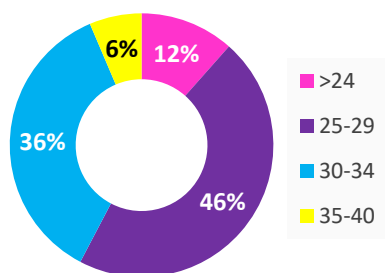


Figure 7 - Age of Learner

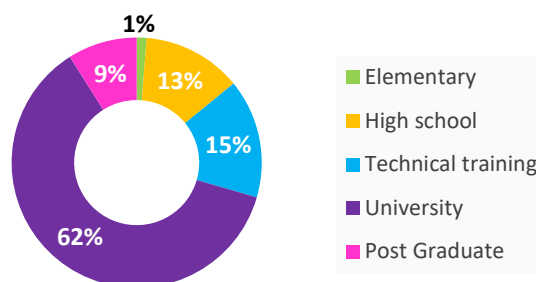


Figure 8 - Level of Education Attained

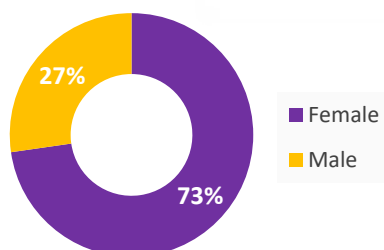


Figure 6 - Participant Gender

⁵ OECD (2020) Employment Outlook 2020 – How Does Italy Compare? [Accessed on May 13, 2021] https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/view/?ref=134_134917-obkmtu87m1&title=Employment-Outlook-Italy-EN&_ga=2.258088010.1991199592.1620907305-1701892838.1620907305

German Training Beneficiary Demographics

The initial launch of the German piloting program was interrupted by COVID-19. [Stiftung Digitale-Chancen](#) operated seven rounds of piloting activities with 78 participants in total. The first round of piloting activities began in June with 12, the second round, launched online, began in August with 15 participants. All further trainings were operated online. The third round launched in September with 13 participants, the fourth round launched in October with 17 participants, and the fifth round launched in November with 15 participant. The sixth round was originally planned for November but was postponed to January and was operated with 9 participants. The seventh round was launched in February for 9 participants. The following findings were gathered upon participants entry into the program. 84% of the participants were female (Figure 11). **41% of participants were over 45 year of age**, with people between the ages of 30 to 34, and 40 to 44 as the next largest groups (Figure 10).

All participants had more than an elementary level of education, and **over 50% had a university level of education**. (Figure 9) 45% of participants reported being partially employed, 27% reported being unemployed, 23% reporting being fully employed and 5% reported being underemployed. It is worth noting that in the new economic contexts many people who already had employment may have been looking for new employment solutions and looking to upskill themselves in anticipation of a job search. The first training course, operated before the impact of the COVID-19 crisis, had a higher percentage of unemployed participants. Rates of partially and fully employed participants increased in the six subsequent online training courses conducted during the crisis.

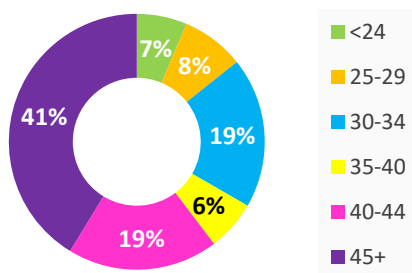


Figure 10 - Age of Participants

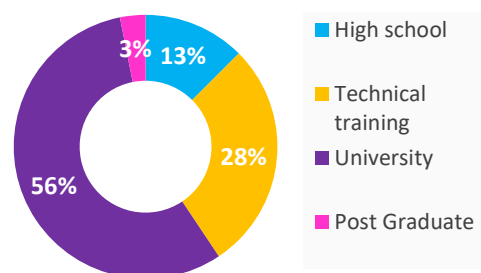


Figure 9 - Level of Education

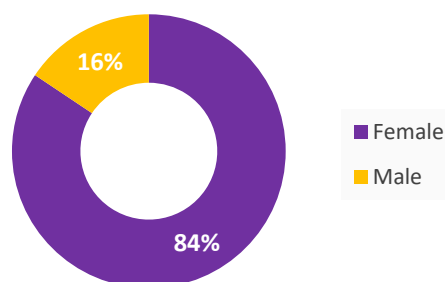


Figure 11 – Participants' gender

56 participants completed the full training programme operated [Stiftung Digitale-Chancen](#) at the time of this report. 91.7% (11) participants completed the first piloting activity. 66.7% (10) completed the second piloting activity. 53.8% (7) completed the third round of training. 41.2% (7) completed the fourth round of training. 46.7% (7) completed the fifth round of training, and 77.8% (7) completed the sixth and seventh rounds of training. (Figure 12)

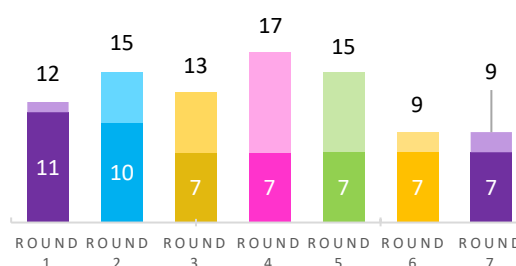


Figure 12 - Course completion rate

The 29% of learners who completed the training were over the age of 45, 21% were between the ages of 40 and 44. (Figure 15) 78.3% of the participants who completed the training are female. (Figure 15) This demonstrates that the percentage of women participating and completing training has decreased but, overall, remains positive. A report on the labour market impacts of the COVID-19 crisis indicated that some groups were disproportionately affected by the pandemic, this group includes self-employed, temporary workers, women, and youth. This could be one reason behind the decrease in female course completers.⁶

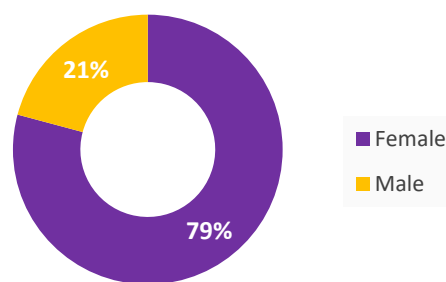


Figure 13 – Participants' Gender

The majority of participants that completed the training had completed university (70%). All participants had more than an elementary level of education. (Figure 14) 33% of participants reported being unemployed, 13% of participants reported being underemployed, 38% reported being partially employed, and 17 % reported being fully employed. There was a 6% increase in unemployment from entrance to exit of the training program, and a movement of 7% from partially employment to under-employment. While this is a more dramatic increase in unemployment than was reported for the country as a whole as reported by the OECD, it does align with the finding that the economic effects of the pandemic were disproportionately felt.⁷ It is also worth noting that some participants were not able to complete the course due to increased work pressures, these participants did not complete the exit survey however and cannot be accurately measured.

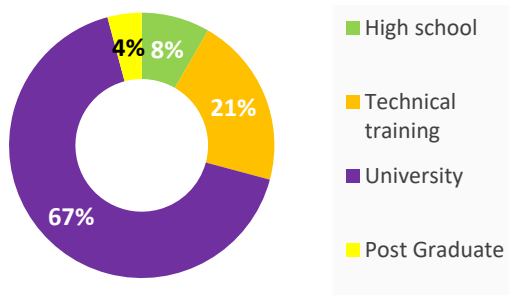


Figure 14 - Level of Education

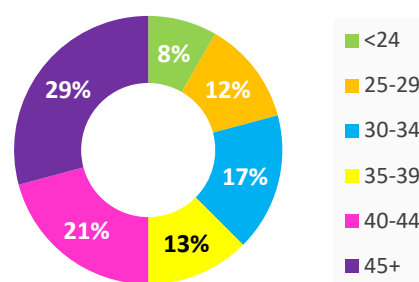


Figure 15 - Age of Participant

⁶ OECD (2020) Employment Outlook 2020 – How Does Germany Compare? [Accessed on May 13, 2021] https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/view/?ref=134_134914-ji1sq3fttc&title=Employment-Outlook-Germany-EN&_ga=2.11146356.1991199592.1620907305-1701892838.1620907305

⁷ Ibid.

French Training Beneficiary Demographics

The initial launch of the French piloting program was interrupted by COVID-19 but modified face to face sessions were resumed in July. 88 participants entered the training operated by [Simplon.co](https://www.simplon.co). The first round of piloting activities began in July with 20 participants, the second round began in September with 10 participants, the third round launched in October with 18 participants, the fourth round launched in November with 18 participants, and the fifth round launched in late November with 22 participants. Participants represented a wide range of ages with the youngest participant being 18 and the oldest being 54. **Nearly half the participants were between the ages of 45 and 54.** (Figure 17)

65% of the participants were female, (Figure 18) which shows that the project's recruitment strategy succeeded in attracting more female participants.

25% of the participants reported only having an elementary level of education, 25% of participants reported having completed a high school level of education and 23% reporting having completed university. (Figure 16) It is valuable to note that there was a wide range of education levels within the highest age range of 45-54. 90% of participants reported being unemployed, and 5% reported being partially employed, 3% reported being under-employed and 2% reported being fully employed.

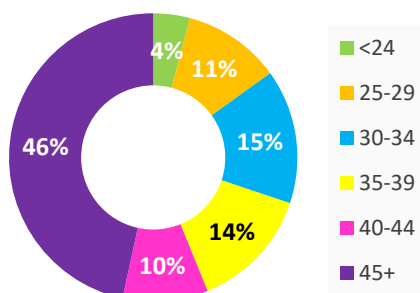


Figure 17 - Age of participants

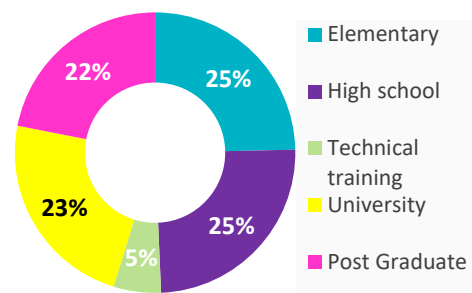


Figure 16 - Level of education

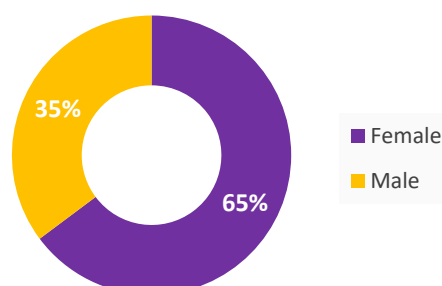


Figure 18 - Participants' gender

87 participants completed the full training programme operated by Simplon.co. 100% (20) participants completed the first piloting activity. 100% (10) completed the second piloting activity. 100% (18) completed the third piloting activity. 94% (17) completed the fourth piloting activity, and 100% (22) completed the fifth piloting (Figure 19).

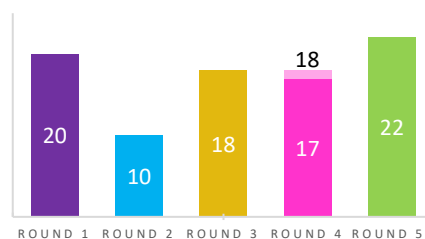


Figure 19 - Course Completion

42% of learners were over the age of 45, and 18% were between the ages of 30 and 34. (Figure 21) 60% of the participants are female. (Figure 22).

Participants that completed the training represented a wide range of educational background with near equal division across most levels of education (Figure 20). 87% of participants reported being unemployed, 9% of participants reported being partially employed, and 3% reported being fully employed. The rate of unemployed participants decreased by 3% between the beginning and end of training courses, and a 3% decrease in participants reporting being under-employed. This is trend is especially significant when compared to the analysis issued by OECD which project a 13% increase in unemployment in France by the end of 2020.⁸

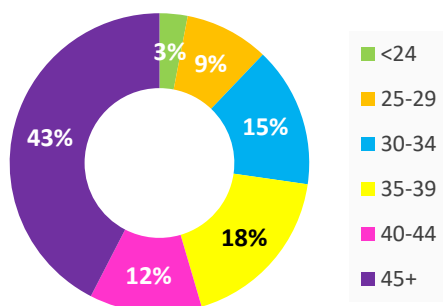


Figure 22 - Age of participants

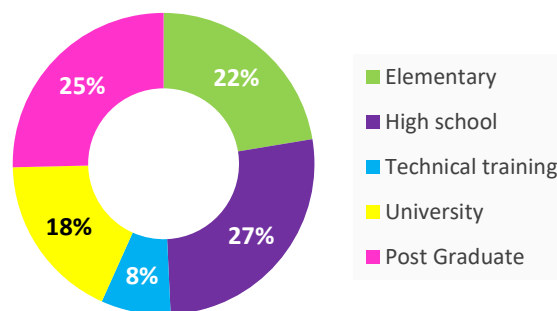


Figure 21 - Level of education

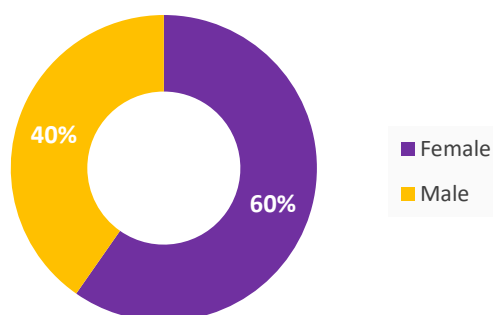


Figure 20 - Participants' gender

⁸ OECD (2020) Employment Outlook 2020 – How Does France Compare? [Accessed on May 13, 2021] https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/view/?ref=134_134962-bl9e974uly&title=Employment-Outlook-France-EN&_ga=2.40124386.1991199592.1620907305-1701892838.1620907305



Trainer Feedback

Project evaluators distributed a survey to all trainers and conducted one on one interviews with a selection of trainers. Trainers across all three implementing partners reported that students' curiosity and engagement was a significant motivator for the course. The use of exercises with usable outputs were found to be especially effective learning tools.

One challenge that trainers reported, was the lack of adequate follow-up practices with students aimed at ensuring that all concepts were understood throughout the learning process. Due to the group work nature of many of the activities it was found that some students would not notify the instructor if they were struggling with a concept.

Another challenge that trainers encountered with operating remote courses was participants ability to access both the technology and space required to participate in the course.

A distinct difference in approach was that the French partners maintained a F2F aspect for all their courses. The trainers involved with these courses reported that the being able to share a physical space truly helped to facilitate a positive learning environment and enhanced the learning experience, specifically referencing the more soft skill oriented components of their training such as confidence building.



Learner Expectations

Participants were asked to respond to two main questions upon entering the course. “Why did you decide to take this course” and “Why is developing digital skills important to you?” Learners responded to these questions by marking how much a selection of response statements corresponded with them.

‘Why did you take this course?’

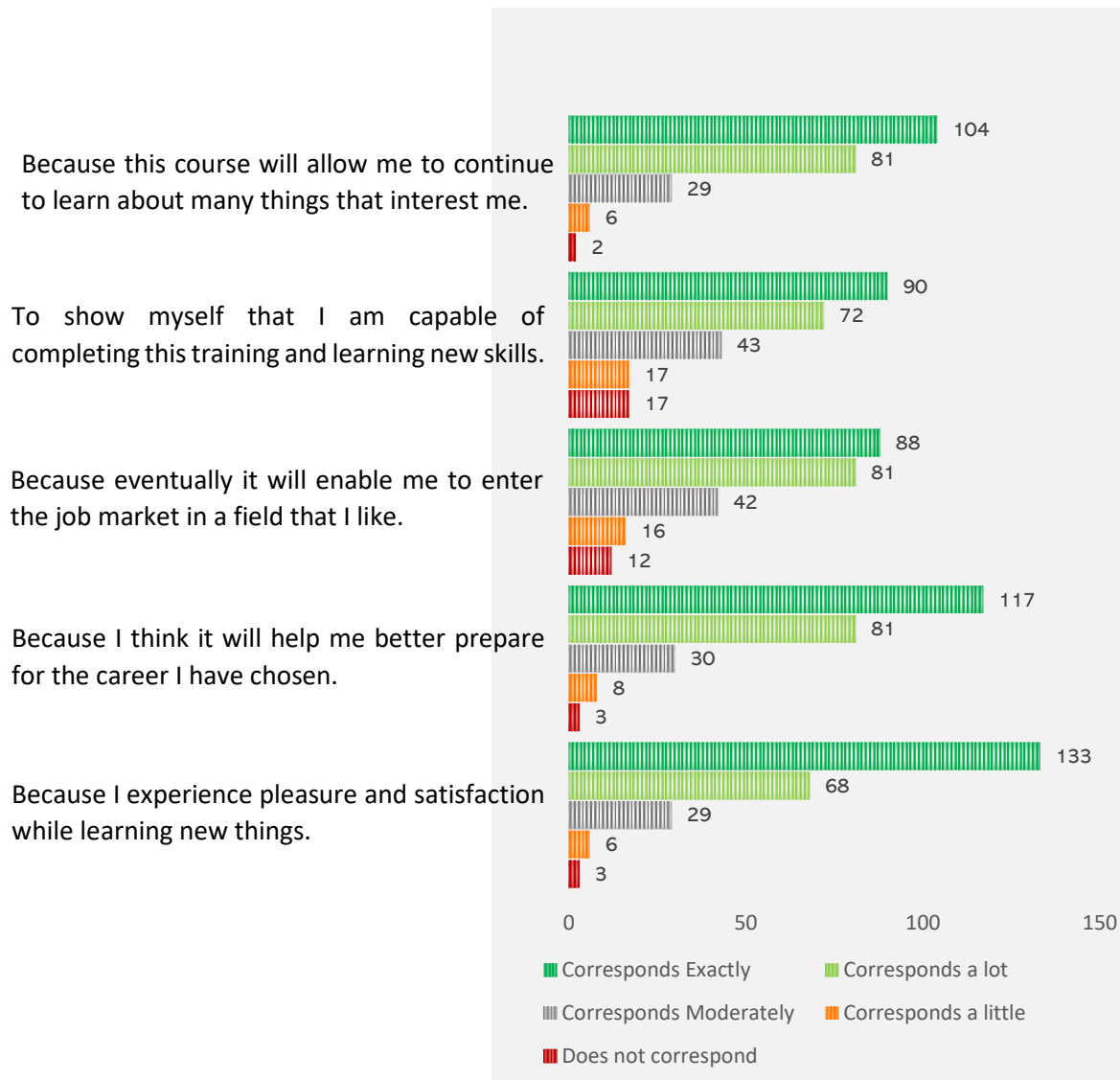


Figure 23 - Question 1, 236 respondents

The vast majority of participants reported a desire for professional development and a desire to learn new skills as motivations for taking the training. Some of the weaker motivations for participation in the course were facing a personal challenge, and entrance into a new job market. Participants did positively correspond with the statement about taking the course to further their perspectives in their chosen careers.

Participants' responses indicated that their motivations for participating in the course was more than purely career driven with most participants reporting they took the course because they enjoy learning new things.

‘Why is developing digital skills important to you?’

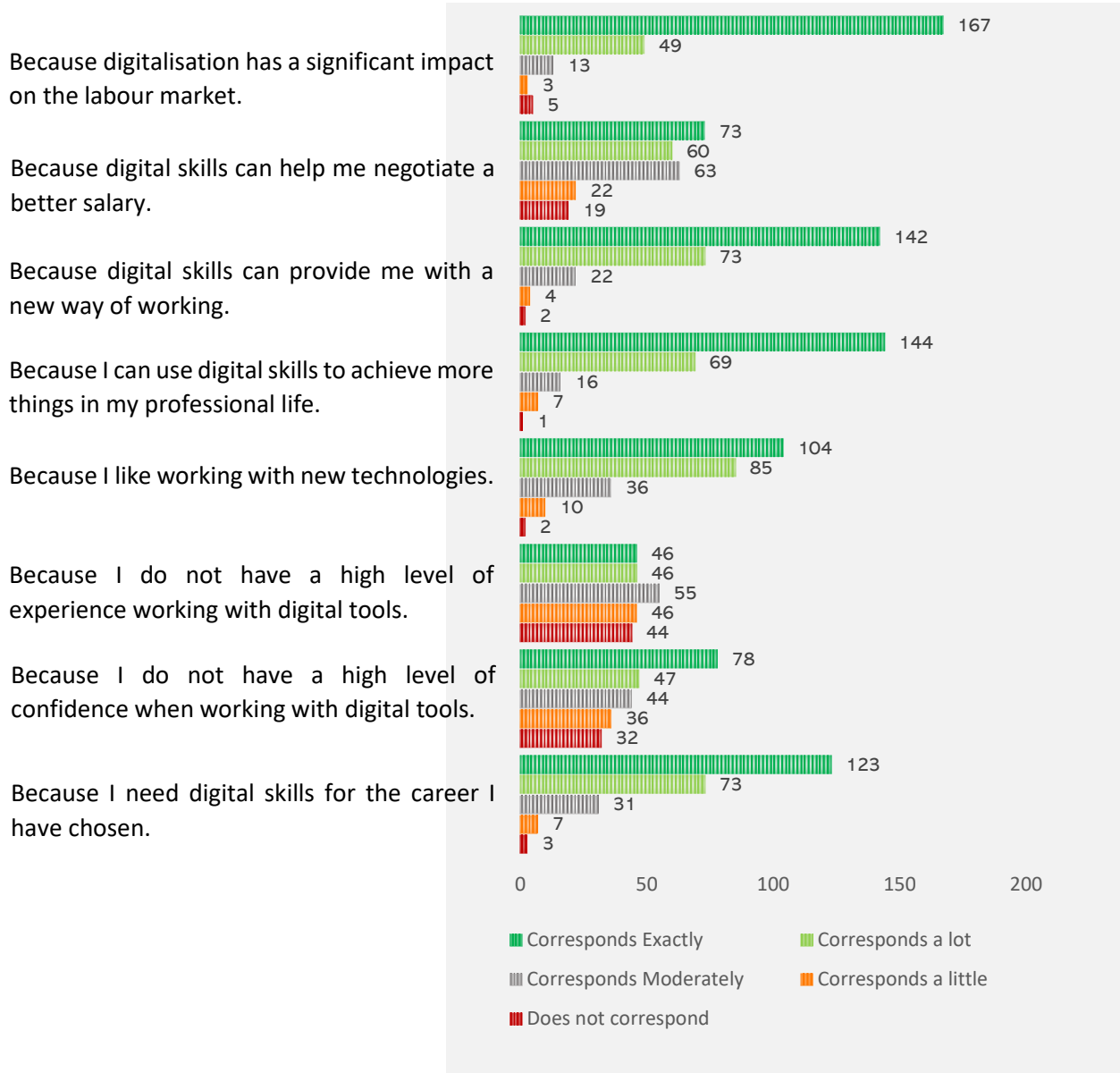


Figure 24 - Question 2, 234 respondents

Responses to the second questions showed that most participants were aware of the importance of digital skills both in the job market and in their professional development, however participants showed an uncertainty that digital skills can help negotiate for a higher salary.

Around 40% of participants reported different levels of confidence and experience with digital tools, most displaying higher levels of experience with the tools than confidence using them, while around 23% of participants reported the reverse.



Learner Feedback

At the end of the training programme, participants were asked to respond to the statements about their impressions of the training course. Learners responded to these statements by marking how much a statement corresponded with their experience.

The majority of participants reported that they enjoyed the Digital Skillshift training course although the feedback indicated that participants felt the course organization and content could be improved. 14% of French participants who left comments requested that the course be extended by at least two weeks, and 14% of participants who left comments across all three countries requested that the course go into more detail on each topic, possibly by dividing the training into more specific units. Other requests included recommendation of recording training sessions and having more 'how-to' video material available to participants to support them in completing at-home assignments.

A majority of participants reported an interest in pursuing more trainings independently, and that they felt they gained applicable skills through the programme. (Figure 25)

Learners' impressions of the course

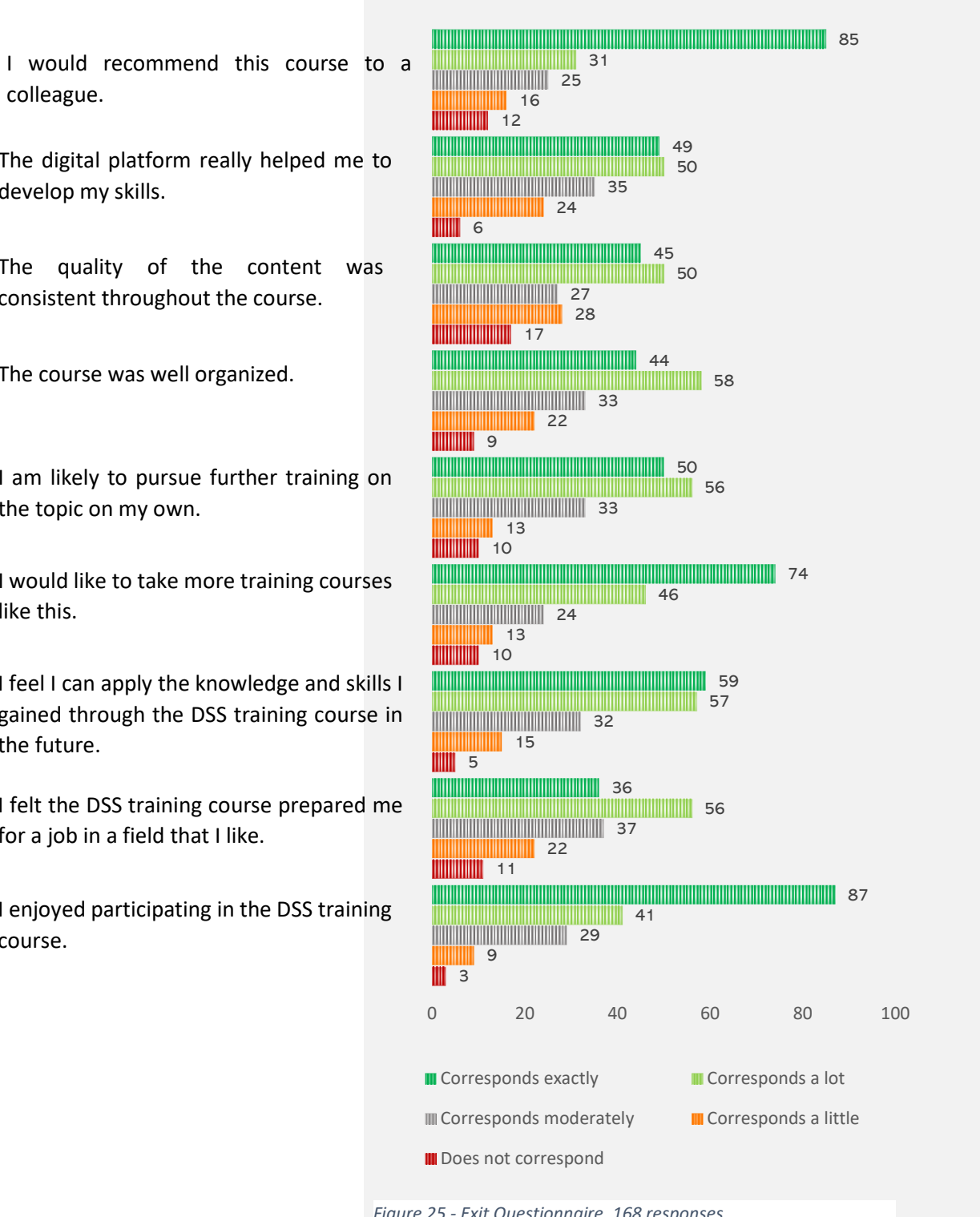


Figure 25 - Exit Questionnaire, 168 responses



Longitudinal Survey

All participants who completed the training were invited to participate in a longitudinal study from fall 2020 to spring 2021. This study was conducted by a survey that was designed to track participants' experiences in the labour market after they have left the training.

Participants were asked to provide responses to seven questions on a five-point scale. Prompts for responses were sent in the three-month period after participants' course completion. The questions were designed to measure if/how trainees apply the skills they acquired in the training in their job search or work life.

Does Not Correspond	Corresponds a little	Corresponds Moderately	Corresponds a lot	Corresponds exactly
1	2	3	4	5

1. I am actively looking for new work.
2. I am looking for more training opportunities.
3. I used the skills I learned in this course in my search for work.
4. I have found new work where I can apply the skills learned in this course.
5. The skills I learned in this course made me a suitable candidate for new work opportunities.
6. I have used the skills learned in this course for my current work.
7. The skills I learned in this course have allowed me to take on new tasks at work.
8. The skills I learned in this course have allowed me to take on a new position at work.

Figure 26 - Longitudinal questionnaire

The longitudinal study had received responses from 52% of participants who had completed the course. Only seventeen participants responded that they had found new work by using the skills they had developed during the course, with over half (7) of those responses registering moderate correspondence. The main sectors identified by these respondents were “Public administration, defense, education, human health and social work” and “Trade, transport, accommodation and catering”. The sample is too small to draw any significant conclusions from these findings.

57% of respondents reported moderate to high agreement that the training had made them a suitable candidate for new work opportunities. 79% of respondents reported pursuing further training.

67% of respondents opted to identify a particular work sector that they are looking to enter. Most of these respondents identified five main sectors, which were ‘Public administration, defense, education, human health and social work’, ‘Information and communications’, ‘Wholesale and retail trade, transport, accommodation and catering’, ‘Scientific and technical professional activities, administrative and support service activities’, and ‘Arts, entertainment and recreation, other service activities’. (Figure 27) 9 % of respondents selected ‘Other’, based on their comments their responses were then reassigned to the closest relevant sector (eg. Early childcare was categorized under Education and social work). 3 respondents selected Other but did not provide any additional information relating to sector. 4 other respondents identified sectors that they have experience in but expressed interest in finding work in new unspecified sectors in the comments.

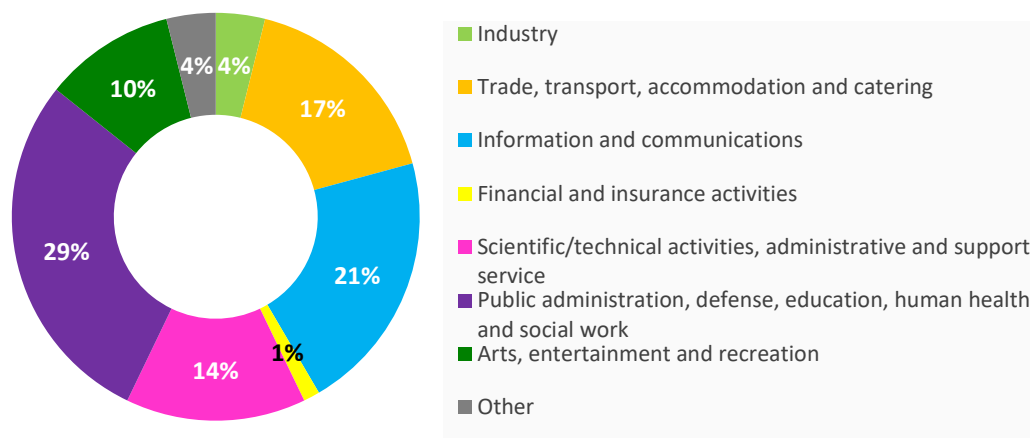


Figure 27 - Target work sectors (Question 3 specification), 78 responses

In the course exit survey 25% of participants reported having some form of work (under-employed, partially employed, fully employed). In the longitudinal questionnaire 55% respondents reported having existing work requiring digital skills.

Of that 55% of longitudinal study respondents, 63% reported high to complete agreement to Question 8 which had participants respond to the statement that they had used the skills developed in the training in their current work. 66% of respondents who had identified having existing work, also reported that the skills they had developed in the training had allowed them to take on more tasks at their current work (Questions 9). Seventeen respondents reported finding a new position at their current work because of the skills they developed. (Figure 28) Of the respondents who reported having existing work 45% identified their work sector as “Public administration, defence, education, human health and social work”, and 16% identified “Information and Communications”.

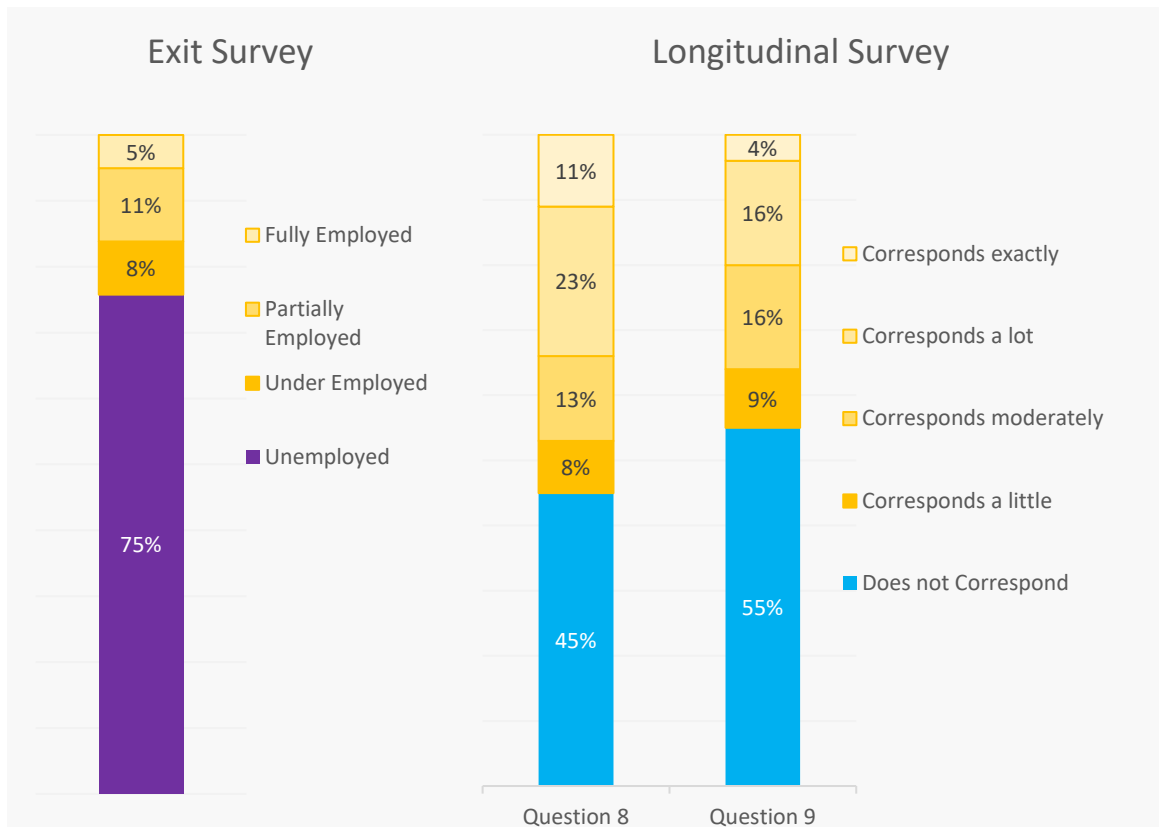


Figure 28 - Exit and Longitudinal Employment responses

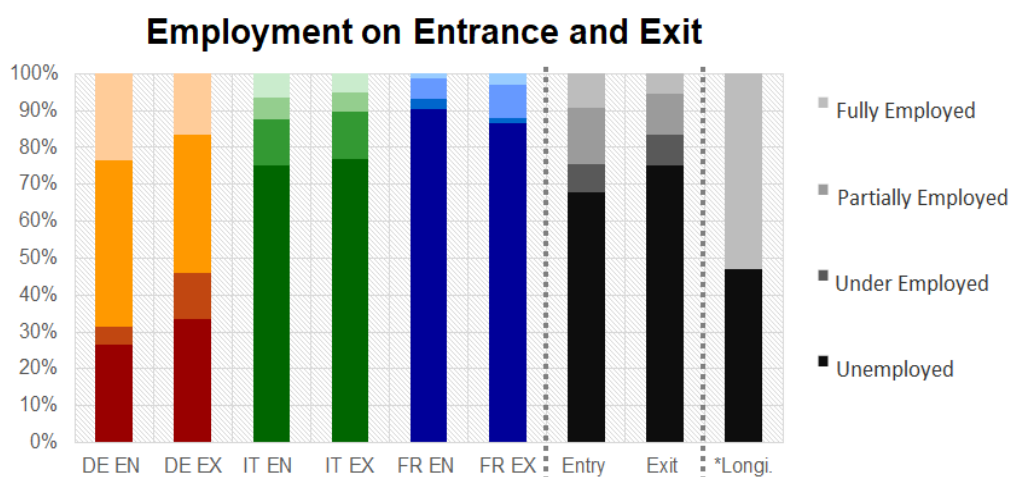
56% of respondents stated that they were looking for new work, and 75% reported seeking more training. 27% of respondents reported looking for both more training and work opportunities.

France had the highest rate of unemployment, with around 90 % of trainees indicating being unemployed upon entering the program, 86% on exit.

Italian participants 75% reported unemployment upon entry into the training, 77% upon exit. The second largest employment group reported being under employed, this response was selected by around 13 % of respondents at the beginning and end of the trainings.

German participants had the highest rate of partial employment with 45% of respondents indicating being partially employed when starting the training, 37% on exit. 23% of the German participants reported being unemployed at the start of the training.

In the training exit surveys 42 participants across all three partners reported having some form of work. In the longitudinal questionnaire 61 respondents reported having existing work. There was a 25% reduction in responses to the longitudinal survey than the exit survey compared to the total number of course completers, but an increase in the portion of respondents who indicated they had found some form of employment. It is important to note here that the Longitudinal Survey did not measure the level of work engagement, so full, partial, and under are all measured as 'Employment'.



It is difficult to measure employability in a time when the ongoing pandemic is still having a highly disruptive effect on standard business practices. However, there is further work to be done in the project's work placement activities. Participants did consistently report that the capacities developed during the training improved their ability to look for work and enhanced their profile by expanding on their skill sets. 17 training participants indicated on the longitudinal survey that the skills they developed in the training helped them to access new work opportunities.

Case Studies

Each implementing partner approached a small number of participants from each training program and invited them to be case studies for the training course. Each case study participant was asked to respond to semi-structured interview described in table 2 at in the three-month period after their training course ended.

These participants were approached by trainers due to their level of participation in the course and their motivation to use these skills in furthering their careers. Participants were asked to first respond to a short list of open-ended questions (Annex 3) which were summarized by partners and submitted to the evaluation team. Further questions from the evaluation team were issued to case study participants through the implementing partners. The follow up questions were individual structured to get a better sense of the type of work activities the case study participants had been engaged in since the completion of the training.





Inès Mombouli

Simplon.co, France

"For people who have never used a computer, the training can really help so that it doesn't stop them anymore, it democratizes tools and a digital culture. I find it awesome that we are now able to do things we didn't know existed!"

Employment Story

Inès has worked in as an administrative assistant in a diverse range of sectors from a British Maritime transportation company to a cosmetics company, and even spent over a year as an entrepreneur. Her entrepreneurial dream was paused in the wake of the 2008 economic crisis, forcing her to stop operations and return to administrative work for a short time. She then launched a new entrepreneurial venture in the Congo aimed globally distributing locally made products such as shoes. She has now returned to France to launch her own cosmetics brand and hopes to use the skills developed in the digital skillshift training to be able to attract new investors and manage the production of her cosmetics products.

Sector: Administration, cosmetics, apparel, marketing

The training in 3 words?

Intense, caring, future.

Inès' mindset in 3 words?

Fulfilling, enriching, satisfied



Basma Sail

Simplon.co, France

"I was looking for a training that'd be a bridge between me and the working world and now I want to create my own start-up!"

Employment Story

Due to the challenges of her health, Basma was not able to complete high school until the age of 20. She dreams of becoming a journalist. Basma was not confident with working with other people when she entered the DIGITAL SKILLSHIFT training program, as the cognitive effects of her disease means she has a different way of communicating with people than most.

During the training Basma was inspired to use the possibilities contained offered by the digital environment to develop her own start-up development project. She is also interested in finding more trainings like the DIGITAL SKILLSHIFT program, that will help her to develop her new idea.

Age: 34

Sector: journalism, and programming

The training in 3 words?

Responsibility, intensity, work

Basma's mindset in 3 words?

Feeling good in my own skin.



Nassima Messouci

Simplon.co, France

“When hearing the word digital before it just meant something very complicated, that I’d never understand but when you actually get into it, it’s fascinating.”

Employment Story

Nassima had worked as a consultant in the health and environment sectors but stopped working for 5 years to start a family and raise her two young children. She had just reentered the job market as a client manager shortly before the COVID-19 pandemic hit France. She has been unable to find new work since then.

Nassima developed a better understanding of the digital vocabulary which she feels will empower her to find a new job. At the time of this report, she was continuing to look for client management work, but is also interested in finding more training in the digital work environment to transition into a more digitally focused career.

Age: 34

Sector: Health and environment

The training in 3 words?
Fulfilling, essential, return to employment.

Nassima’s mindset in 3 words?
Motivated, determined, self-confident



Flaminia Mammetti

Patrizio Paoletti Foundation, Italy

Employment Story

Flaminia has always had a keen interest in foreign languages and cultures, and Communications. She is currently working as a Social Media Manager and teaches English. She is continuing to pursue other initiatives, and recently completed a project organized through the local public school system.

Age: 25

Sector: Media Communication, Teaching and International Communications

Education: BA in Cultural mediation; MA in Interpreting and Translation

The training in 3 words? Stimulating, education, and beneficial

Flaminia’s mindset in 3 words?
Dynamic, ambitious, and eager to learn



Simone Vellucci

Patrizio Paoletti Foundation, Italy

Employment Story

Simone has always been passionate about working closely with people and has sought out this kind of work throughout his academic and professional career. Over time, he has developed a deep interest in all issues relating to Human Resources management, digital technologies and the field of 360-degree training.

Age: 26

Sector: Training

Education: BA in Training and HR Development; MS Adult Education

The training in 3 words? Fun, stimulating, and useful

Simone's mindset in 3 words? Curious, ambitious, and open to change



Tobias Rütten

Stiftung Digitale Chancen, Germany

Employment Story

Before and during the trainings Tobias was working in a media learning centre and then transitioned to being a self-employed docent. In this capacity he conducted courses at the local VHS ("Volkshochschule") and teaching IT-skills at a senior centre.

After the trainings Tobias decided to take part in a social project organized by the employment agency. Through this initiative he has been providing visually impaired people with CDs containing recordings of readings of recent newspaper articles. This is a temporary position but has allowed Tobias to further develop his digital skills.

Age: 37

Sector: Adult education, media, music

Education: BA in Music and Media; MA Media Sciences

The training in 3 words? Versatile, exciting, and inspiring

Jakob's mindset in 3 words? Enthusiastic, conscientious, and socially



Sabine Lieb

Stiftung Digitale Chancen, Germany

"[The course] gave you a feeling like 'Ah cool! This is not so difficult. I can continue to do this on my own.'"

Employment Story

She is from near Nuremburg and has been living between Germany and Spain. It has been a long time she has held a job in a traditional team or company environment and wanted to have the opportunity have more experiences working in a digital team.

Sabine works in an association with her friends and family. Because of this work she had some experiences with holding virtual meetings but had felt she only had a basic understanding of how the tools could be used to make her work easier. Completing the course digitally was interesting for Sabine as it allowed her to both theoretically and practically explore the uses of these digital tools.

The training in 3 words?

Structured, clear, and explorative



Katharina Hoffman

Stiftung Digitale Chancen, Germany

"There is almost no job available today that doesn't require you to work digitally"

Employment Story

She is in the job market and knows that she needs to increase her digital competencies and build on her existing knowledge of digital tools.

Since completing the course Katharina has launched her own podcast and created an Instagram profile for the podcast. Going forward she is planning to launch her own website for the podcast.

Age: 27

Sector: Communication

The training in 3 words?

Experience, exchange, connection

Conclusions and Recommendations

The project and its implementing partners have well demonstrated the adaptability and usefulness of the Digital Skillshift training program to develop basic digital skills despite the exceptional circumstances experienced in 2020- 2021. The training was implemented on two different platforms, to similar learning outcomes. Feedback from trainers and participants has shown a desire for more trainings to be designed that cover more detailed components. Trainers reported that the core methodology and project guidance was easy to implement and adapt to local contexts. The training could be improved by dividing the material into separate courses, allowing participants and trainers to go more in depth on a particular topic or tool.

The project materials should continue to be developed, with more out of course materials such as summary tables, lecture recordings, and additional operational exercises could enhance students experience and empower them to gain further experience and understanding through independent study.

This project was able to swiftly refocus its implementation strategy in response to the Coronavirus pandemic, this flexibility of implementation is a clear strength for the project. Participants also reported that they enjoyed being able to put the knowledge they gained through the course into immediate use in the implementation of the course through digital tools. Even when face to face trainings becomes available again, course organizers are encouraged to use a blended method of training having participants complete some exercises, and group assignments, virtually.

The main challenge repeated across partners was that some participants had difficulties accessing the technology required for digital work was difficult for some participants to access from home. This is a problem that will require more consideration in the design of future trainings. While some companies offer their employees computers or laptops for their work, that still does not address issues of internet connectivity or difficult home-working environments. The other significant challenge was engaging with employers and supporting participants in engaging with employment opportunities. This was dominantly due to the change in hiring practices during the pandemic.

Many companies and workers have had to come to terms with the rapid adoption of digital tools experienced throughout this year, as people were driven to work from home. This has created a need for companies to have more companies familiar with digital tools on their teams, and workers have had to take on new competencies. The Digital Skillshift program is well suited the task of helping both companies and workers bridge this gap. The next step is to get deeper engagement with employers to assist them in incorporating digital assistants into their teams and workflow.

A report from trainers made a note that some participants failed to complete the course because they got a work opportunity. It is unclear if there a relationship between the skills developed in the course and this reason for non-completion. It would be beneficial to have more information from participants who must exit the course early. A comment from another participant was that their work search ended shortly after the training after falling severely ill. The complex nature of the work market and requires more detailed analysis.

In view of what is happening right now, there is a need for more hybrid solutions for trainings. It is our recommendation that future trainings include both digital and face to face methodologies during the initial design phase of projects.

ANNEX 1: Employer Survey Results

A total of 46 completions of the survey were achieved during the five-week duration of the survey being live with an even balance across the three countries. There was a wide spread across sectors; a majority of SMEs but a significant number of larger employers (almost one quarter were 250+, and a third were 100 employees or more). Around 60% had been operating for more than 10 years, with almost 30% in operation longer than 20 years. 90% were in urban areas.

1. What is your country?

France	Germany	Italy
28.26%	26.09%	28.26%

2. Sector

Education	Public Administration	Information and Communication	Health and Social Work	Primary Sector and Utilities	Tourism, Hotels and Restaurants
23.91%	15.22%	13.04%	6.52%	6.52%	6.52%

3. Length of Operation

Less than 1 year	1-3 Years	4-10 Years	10-20 Years	20+ years
10.87%	10.87%	19.57%	30.43%	28.26%

4. Business Location

Urban	Rural
89.13%	10.87%

5. Business Type

Sole Trader or Partnership	Company	Charity or Association
19.57%	54.35%	26.09%

6. Number of Employees

1	2-4	5-24	25-49	50-99	100-249	250+
8.70%	13.04%	28.26%	10.87%	4.35%	10.87%	23.91%

7. Roles existing in your organization (tick all that apply)

Manager/ Director	Administration/ Clerical staff	HR/Education/ Training	Kitchen, Cleaning, and other support staff	Professional (e.g. incl. Medical, Financial, Legal, etc.)
86.96%	69.57%	52.17%	23.91%	39.13%
IT/Technical	Skilled trades	Creative	Sales and customer services	Machine operators/Maintenance
47.83%	17.39%	28.26%	30.43%	8.70%
Labouring	Personal Care/ Health	Other		
13.04%	8.70%	10.87%		

8. Do you perceive that any of the following will cause 'digital disruption' to your sector in the next three years? (tick all that apply)

Digital working tools	Automation/Robotics	Augmented Reality/ Virtual Reality	Blockchain/Cryptocurrencies
78.05%	36.59%	43.90%	21.95%
Internet of Things	Artificial Intelligence	3D Printing	Big Data
41.49%	39.02%	14.63%	41.46%

9. How much do you believe your company revenue may be affected by digital disruption in the next three years?

Grow a lot	Grow a little	Won't Change	Fall a Little
29.27%	31.71%	34.15%	4.88%

10. Digital technologies are also disruption how we work, do you perceive that there will be any skills training needs for your company as a result of the following 'Digital Working Tools' in the next three years? (Tick all that apply)

Teamworking and collaboration skills through online tools such as Google Drive , Office 365, Basecamp, Slack, Teamwork, Trello, etc.	82.93%
Communication and presentation skills through online tools such as Powerpoint, Google slides, Prezi, etc.	43.90%
Creative and design skills through digital tools such as Photoshop, Premier, After Effects, Canva, Powtoon, VideoScribe, etc.	36.59%
Content and Data Management skills through tools such as Wordpress, Google analytics, etc.	60.98%
Other (please specify)	14.63%

11. Do you perceive that there will be any job losses or job gains caused by the digital disruption to your company in the next three years? (Tick all the apply)

	Online Working	Automation/ Robotics	Augmented Reality/ Virtual Reality	Blockchain/ Cryptocurrencies
Job Gains	52.63%	24.32%	10.00%	20.51%
Job Losses	13.16%	21.62%	5.00%	8.11%
Don't Know	34.21%	54.05%	55.00%	59.46%
	Internet of Things	Artificial Intelligence	3D Printing	Big Data
Job Gains	35.14%	43.59%	27.03%	51.35%
Job Losses	8.11%	15.38%	13.51%	5.41%
Don't Know	59.46%	41.03%	64.86%	43.24%

12. From 1 (low) to 5 (high) please rank how important the following types of **Information and Data Literacy** skills are in your company (e.g. to identify, store, organize and analyse digital information, judging its relevance and purpose)

	Average
Browsing, searching and filtering data, information and digital content	4.03
Evaluating data, information and digital content	3.90
Managing data, information and digital content	4.03

13. From 1(low) to 5(high) please rank how important the following types of **Communication and Collaboration** skills are in your company (e.g. to communicate digitally, share resources online, collaborate through digital tools, interact with communities and networks, etc.)

	Average
Interacting through digital technologies	3.87
Sharing through digital technologies	4.00
Engaging in citizenship through digital technologies	3.38
Collaborating through digital technologies	3.97
Netiquette	3.13

Managing digital identity	3.23
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14. From 1(low) to 5(high) please rank how important the following types of **Digital Content Creation** skills are in your company (e.g. to create and edit new content; integrate existing content; apply intellectual property rights and licenses, coding and programming, etc.)

	Average
Developing digital content	3.74
Integration and re-elaborating digital content	3.79
Copyright and licenses	3.28
Programming	3.21

15. From 1(low) to 5(high) please rank how important the following types of **Safety** skills are in your company (e.g. personal protection, data protection, digital identity protection, security measures, safe and sustainable use)

	Average
Protecting devices	3.67
Protecting personal data and privacy	4.03
Protecting health and well-being	3.49
Protecting the environment	3.46

16. From 1(low) to 5(high) please rank how important the following types of **Problem Solving** skills are in your company (e.g. Identify digital needs and resources, make information decisions on most appropriate digital tools according to the purpose or need, solve technical problems, etc.)

	Average
Solving technical problems	3.69
Identifying needs and technological responses	3.77
Creatively using digital technologies	4.00
Identifying digital competence gaps	3.85

17. When you recruit staff does your company generally...? (tick all that apply)

Look for a person with an exact skill set matching all requirements	30.77%
Look for a person with most of the needed skills (they can learn on the job).	58.97%
Offer initial in-house training to a new applicant with only some of the required skills	33.33%
Offer in-house retraining to existing staff to enable them to apply	28.21%
Work with training organisations to identify and train candidates in a tailored set of skills	15.38%
Other (please specify)	5.13%

18. In your company what are the barriers to retraining staff for new roles, rather than recruiting new staff? (Tick all that apply)

It is perceived to be cheaper to recruit than retrain	25.64%
It is perceived to be simpler to recruit than retrain	28.21%
It is perceived to be quicker to recruit than retrain	23.08%
We retrain rather than recruit	25.64%
Other (please specify)	12.82%

ANNEX 2: Entry Survey

This questionnaire was delivered via LimeSurvey.org.

This section of the questionnaire is designed to get a sense of your background, training, and employment experience, as well as learn about your expectations for the course.

[Digital SkillShift](#) is a flexible learning programme focused on a specific job role, a [Digital Assistant](#). It upskills citizens facing the challenges that new digital technology is creating within the labour market. This questionnaire is designed to get a sense of your background, training, and employment experience, as well as learn about your expectations for the course.

Question	Response				
1) Age:					
2) Nationality:					
3) Gender:	Male	Female		Other	
4) Ethnicity:	Text (Please ignore the question if it does not apply to your case)				
5) Married:	Yes	No	Separated	I'd prefer not to say	
6) Highest level of education attained	Elementary	High School	Technical training	University	Post Graduate
7) Employment Status (including self-employment)	Unemployed	Under-employed	Partially employed (Part-time)	Fully employed	
8) Status	Disabled	Immigrant	Refugee	None	I'd prefer not to say
9) Income Level	Low	Moderate	Middle	Upper	I'd prefer not to say

Please mark to what extent each of the following items presently corresponds to one of the reasons why you decided to take this course.

Does not correspond	Corresponds a little	Corresponds moderately	Corresponds a lot	Corresponds exactly
1	2	3	4	5

A. Why did you decide to take this course?

a. Because I experience pleasure and satisfaction while learning new things.

1 2 3 4 5

b. Because I think that it will help me better prepare for the career I have chosen.

1 2 3 4 5

c. Because eventually it will enable me to enter the job market in a field that I like.

1 2 3 4 5

d. To show myself that I am capable of completing this training and learning new skills.

1 2 3 4 5

e. Because this course will allow me to continue to learn about many things that interest me.

1 2 3 4 5

B. Why is developing digital skills important to you?

a. Because I need digital skills for the career I have chosen.

1 2 3 4 5

b. Because I do not have a high level of confidence when working with digital tools.

1 2 3 4 5

c. Because I do not have a high level of experience with digital tools.

1 2 3 4 5

d. Because I like working with new technologies.

1 2 3 4 5

e. Because I can use digital skills to achieve more things in my professional life.

1 2 3 4 5

f. Because digital skills can provide me with new ways of working.

1 2 3 4 5

g. Because digital skills can help me negotiate a better salary.

1 2 3 4 5

h. Because digitalisation has a significant impact on the labour market

1 2 3 4 5

ANNEX 3: Exit Survey

This questionnaire was delivered via LimeSurvey.org.

This section of the questionnaire is designed to get a sense of your training experience, in the DSS training course.

[Digital SkillShift](#) is a flexible learning programme focused on a specific job role, a [Digital Assistant](#). It upskills citizens facing the challenges that new digital technology is creating within the labour market. This questionnaire is designed to get a sense of your background, training, and employment experience, as well as learn about your expectations for the course.

	Question	Response				
1)	Age:	Text				
2)	Nationality:	Text				
3)	Gender:	Male	Female		Other	
4)	Ethnicity:	Text (Please ignore the question if it does not apply to your case)				
5)	Married:	Yes	No	Separated	I'd prefer not to say	
6)	Highest level of education attained	Elementary	High School	Technical training	University	Post Graduate
7)	Employment Status (including self-employment)	Unemployed	Under-employed	Partially employed (Part-time)	Fully employed	
8)	Status	Disabled	Immigrant	Refugee	None	I'd prefer not to say
9)	Income Level	Low	Moderate	Middle	Upper	I'd prefer not to say
10)	How many hours a week did you spend on average on the learning platform outside of scheduled class time?					
	< 5 hours	5- 10 hours	11-15 hours	16- 20 hours	> 20 hours	

Please mark to what extent each of the following items presently corresponds to one of the reasons why you decided to take this course.

Does not correspond Corresponds a little Corresponds moderately Corresponds a lot Corresponds exactly

1 2 3 4 5

a. I enjoyed participating in the DSS training course.

1 2 3 4 5

b. I felt the DSS training course prepared me for a job in a field that I like.

1 2 3 4 5

c. I feel I am able to apply in the future the knowledge and skills I gained through the DSS training course.

1 2 3 4 5

d. I would like to take more training courses like this.

1 2 3 4 5

e. I am likely to pursue further training on the topic on my own.

1 2 3 4 5

f. I did not learn anything new from participating in this course.

1 2 3 4 5

g. The course was well organized.

1 2 3 4 5

h. The quality of the content was consistent throughout the course.

1 2 3 4 5

i. The digital learning platform really helped me to develop my skills.

1 2 3 4 5

j. I would recommend this course to a colleague.

1 2 3 4 5

Course Feedback - Do you have any comments or recommendations to add?

ANNEX 4: Case Study Opening Questions

Have you found any new work since completing the training?

- a) No but I am actively looking. Please provide further details in **Section 1**
- b) Yes. Please provide further details in **Section 2**
- c) No, but I have changed roles at my current job. **Section 3**
- d) No, I have continued training or taking time for myself. This ends the survey.

Section 1 – For trainees looking for a job

- 1) Have you used the skills you learned through the training course in your job search? If yes, how?
- 2) Have you included new job profiles in your job search since completing the course? If yes, how?

Section 2 – For trainees with a new job

- 1) Have you used the skills you learned in your work? If yes, how?
- 2) What skills do you feel have been the most useful to you?

Section 3 – For trainees with a new role

- 1) How has your job changed since you completed the training?
- 2) Were the skills you learned useful in changing roles?