Criteria for professional digital competence in youth work
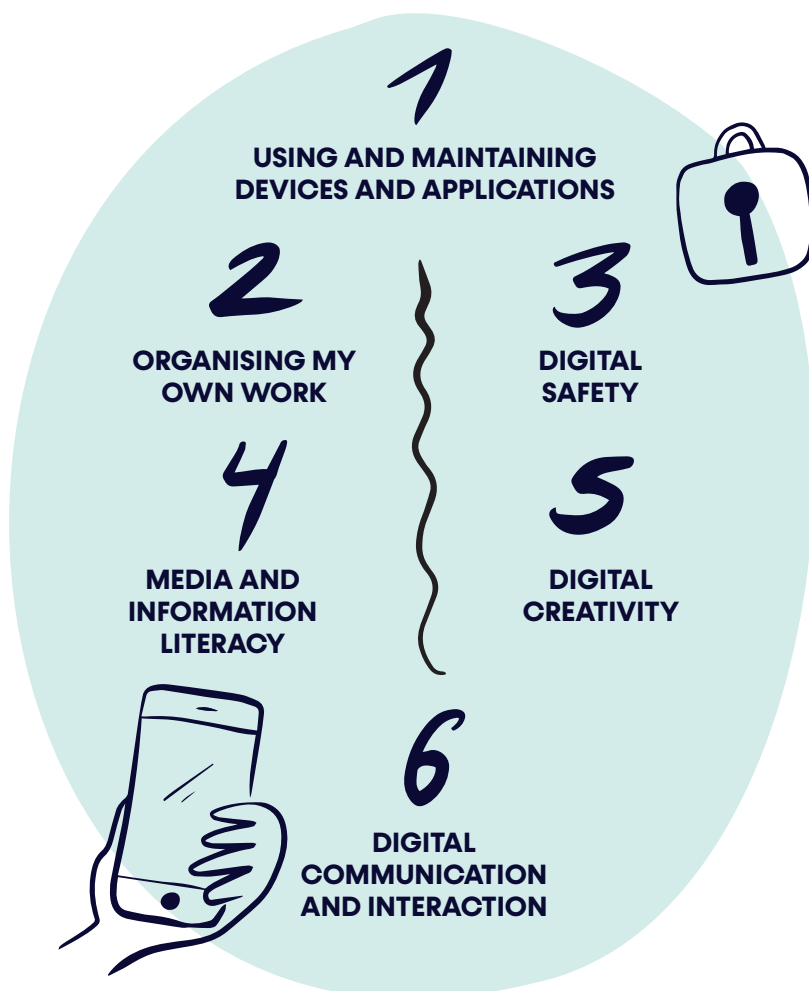
Digitalisation and technological development are some of the most notable driving forces in society affecting leisure time, work and education. Today, digital skills are considered civic skills that everyone should possess in order to navigate everyday life. At the same time, digitalisation has significantly changed the realm of experience of young people and given rise to entirely new youth culture phenomena. In order for youth work to keep up with societal change, youth work professionals must possess a diverse range of up-to-date skills.

WHY SHOULD PROFESSIONAL DIGITAL COMPETENCE BE STRENGTHENED?

1. Digitalisation has profound impacts on young people.
2. The ways of working are changing as a result of digitalisation.
3. Strengthening the digital competence of young people is an important part of youth work.
4. Technology opens up new possibilities for youth work services and activities.

The Centre of Expertise for Digital Youth Work coordinated by Verke has prepared a set of criteria for professional digital competence in youth work in collaboration with youth work operators. The aim of the criteria is to make visible what kind of digital competence every youth work professional should possess in order to carry out high-quality youth work that corresponds to the needs of young people.

The criteria are based on the European Digital Competence Framework (DigComp) produced by the European Commission. Other resources utilised in the preparation of the criteria include national and international strategy programmes steering youth work.

1 USING AND MAINTAINING DEVICES AND APPLICATIONS

2 ORGANISING MY OWN WORK

3 DIGITAL SAFETY

4 MEDIA AND INFORMATION LITERACY

5 DIGITAL CREATIVITY

6 DIGITAL COMMUNICATION AND INTERACTION

The criteria consist of six competence areas, which each have a list of practical competence requirements. Digital competence required in work means the knowledge and skills concerning the digital domain that a youth work professional is generally required to possess in order to carry out their work. Digital competence in youth work practice refers to knowledge and skills that a youth work professional is required to possess in order to incorporate digitality into youth work processes.

To facilitate the practical utilisation of the criteria, Verke has created a separate self-assessment tool and competence test. These tools can be utilised by youth work organisations to assess the digital competence of employees, define competence requirements and develop competence.

All materials are available at www.digitalcompetence.verke.org.

CRITERIA FOR PROFESSIONAL DIGITAL COMPETENCE IN YOUTH WORK

1 USING AND MAINTAINING DEVICES AND APPLICATIONS

Digital competence required in work
- I know how to install the programs and applications required by my work if necessary.
- I know how to justify the need for the devices and applications required by my work to my employer if necessary.
- I know how to use the software and digital services required by my employer and know where to get additional support in their use.
- I know how to set the basic settings of the mobile devices provided by my employer, such as sharing location data and managing network connections and applications.

Digital competence in youth work practice
- I know how to guide young people in the use of the equipment provided by youth work.
- I know how to use the devices and applications provided by my employer in reaching and engaging with young people and implementing youth work processes.

2 ORGANISING MY OWN WORK

Digital competence required in work
- I understand what digital youth work means.
- I know how to utilise digital solutions in planning my work.
- I know how to utilise digital solutions in mapping out the wishes and needs of young people.
- I know how to utilise digital solutions in organising and assessing services as well as gathering feedback from young people.
- I know how to make time for youth work carried out in digital environments.

Digital competence in youth work practice
- I know how to carry out digital youth work in accordance with my organisation's objectives.
- I know how to set objectives for the use of digital media and technology in my own youth work.
- I know how to promote youth participation and equality (e.g. taking minorities into consideration) with the help of digital media and technology.
- I know how to guide young people to the digital services of reliable actors.

3 DIGITAL SAFETY

Digital competence required in work
- I understand what is meant by online identifiers (e.g. IP address, cookie) and what they are used for.
- I understand what is meant by the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act.
- I know how to create a secure password as well as use and manage passwords in services that I use as an employee.
- I know how to comply with the data security guidelines of my organisation in my work.
- I know how to securely share access rights to shared accounts in services used for work.
- I know how to look up the terms of use for the services I use as well as assess the ethical and legal issues related to the use of the services (e.g. the age limit for the service, who owns the service, which country's legislation the service administrator complies with).

Digital competence in youth work practice
- I understand what is meant by digital rights and know how to address the theme with young people.
- I know how to talk with young people about issues related to their personal data, terms of services and privacy management.
- I know how to comply with the data protection principles when communicating with young people and when processing their personal data.

4 MEDIA AND INFORMATION LITERACY

Digital competence required in work
- I recognise current phenomena related to digitalisation and the effects of digitalisation on society and young people.
- I recognise media cultures and media usage habits of young people as well as current youth culture phenomena related to them.
- I understand how large an impact digital technology and media have on the lives of young people.
- I know how to look for and critically assess various forms of media content and digital technologies.

Digital competence in youth work practice
- I understand what is meant by the terms 'media education' (incl. game education) and 'technology education'.
- I know how to strengthen young people's information seeking skills and critical thinking with regard to digital content and services.
- I know how to address the risks related to the use of digital media and technology (e.g. disinformation, adverse effects of gaming, online harassment, grooming, hate speech) with young people.
- I know how to address the positive and negative effects of digital technology on well-being with young people.
- I know how to discuss the environmental impacts of the use of digital technology with young people.

5 DIGITAL CREATIVITY

Digital competence required in work
- I know how to produce text, images, audio and video with the equipment, programs and applications I use at work and publish them in digital environments (e.g. social media), taking accessibility into account.
- I understand what copyright means and how it must be taken into account in the consuming, producing and sharing of digital content.
- I know how to look for and use content available under a free licence (e.g. Creative Commons).

Digital competence in youth work practice
- I understand the possibilities offered by practical technology education (e.g. programming, maker culture, robotics) in supporting the self-expression and creativity of young people.
- I know how to support young people in their self-expression and creativity by utilising digital technology.
- I know how to offer young people tools for producing digital content.

6 DIGITAL COMMUNICATION AND INTERACTION

Digital competence required in work
- I recognise young people's digital communication habits and cultures (e.g. emojis, memes, abbreviations).
- I know how to act in accordance with my employer's guidelines and good practice in digital environments.
- I know how to manage my professional online identity and maintain a professional relationship and boundaries with young people in digital environments.
- I know how to interact with young people in digital environments in accordance with the principles of professional ethics for youth work (e.g. ethical guidelines for online youth work, professional ethical guidelines for youth work).
- I know how to utilise digital tools in professional interaction and work in digital environments in various cooperation networks.
- I know how to utilise the opportunities for professional development offered by digitalisation (e.g. online courses, lectures and materials, peer support).
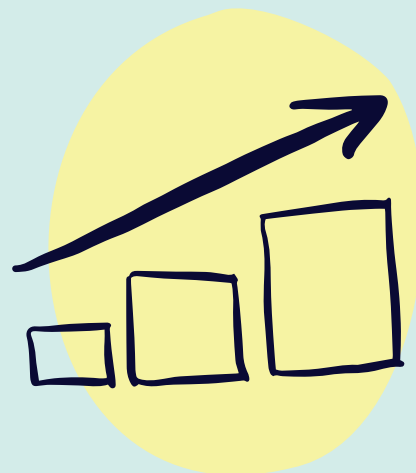
Digital competence in youth work practice
- I know how to support young people in building their digital identity.
- I know how to support young people in finding digital methods of strengthening their social relationships, engaging in cooperation, promoting digital competence and participating in activities that interest them.
- I know how to provide young people with ways to influence society by utilising digital technology.
- I know how to recognise and support young people's own ways of influencing and participating in society.
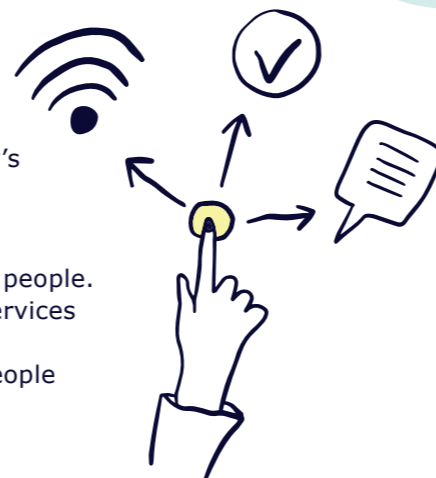
PRACTICAL TIPS FOR DEVELOPING PROFESSIONAL DIGITAL COMPETENCE

- **Think about your own attitude towards digitalisation** and how it is reflected in your work. Digitalisation presents both opportunities and risks. Make sure that you have the competence to consider both perspectives when working with young people.

- **Challenge your own ways of thinking.** Even if you are not personally interested in a new technology, service or youth culture phenomenon, it may still be very important and meaningful for young people.

- **Keep an open mind** and familiarise yourself with the services and online communities popular among young people. While doing so, you can also use online communities to collect young people's thoughts and wishes regarding the kind of recreational activities they would like to take part in in their local areas or online.

- **Explore new digital tools** and phenomena together with young people. Give them a chance to guide you, as doing so allows you to not only strengthen your own digital competence, but also provides young people with experiences of empowerment.

- **Think about what kind** of legislative or professional ethical challenges you have encountered in digital environments. These can relate to privacy, data security or copyright, for example. Ask your employer for policies and guidelines regarding them, if necessary.

- **Broach the subject** of developing digital competence with your superior during career development discussions or your work community's planning day, for example.

- **Do not hesitate** to share your digital competence with others in your work community, and encourage your colleagues to share theirs as well (through digital mentoring, 'stealing workshops' or 'digital quarter-hours,' for example). Network and seek knowledge outside of your organisation as well, both nationally and internationally.

- **Explore the wide range** of training opportunities regarding professional digital competence in youth work, including training opportunities outside of the sector, such as open online courses (MOOCs) organised by various universities.

In addition to the competence criteria, self-assessment tool and competence test, Verke offers a wide range of free-of-charge support materials for developing professional digital competence in youth work.

For more information, please visit www.verke.org.

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