

MS4 Stakeholder Survey Summary



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About the DigPlay project

DigPlay is a forward-looking Erasmus+ project that reimagines how digital competences are assessed in secondary and vocational education (VET), especially for learners aged 14–19 who are underserved, disengaged or underrepresented in digital learning and future career pathways. By embedding assessment into familiar and motivating digital spaces—video games—the project transforms evaluation from a static test into an engaging, formative journey.

DigPlay maps gameplay behaviours to transversal digital skills such as collaboration, content creation, safety and problem- solving. The project introduces a robust, scalable assessment methodology that reflects how young people naturally learn and interact with technology, offering a progression model with personalised feedback and career guidance.

Through cross-sectoral cooperation, the project will develop the DigPlay assessment framework, train educators and business mentors, pilot activities in 20+ schools across five countries, and deploy a digital platform for tracking learner progress. It places strong emphasis on inclusion—particularly of girls, rural youth and learners at risk of exclusion—by lowering barriers to participation and building digital confidence through culturally relevant learning experiences.

DigPlay supports the objectives of the Digital Education Action Plan and Erasmus+ horizontal priorities by fostering innovation, equity and digital transformation in education. It contributes to policy and system-level change by producing tools, data and demonstrators that inform national strategies and support EU efforts to ensure that 80% of citizens have basic digital skills by 2030. DigPlay helps ensure that every learner’s digital skills are recognised and valued in ways that reflect how they actually use technology.

The DigPlay Consortium

The DigPlay project involves a consortium of seven partner organisations from Croatia, Ireland, Bulgaria, Slovenia, and Italy.

No	Partner	Country	Acronym
1.	PROFIL KLETT D.O.O.	Croatia	PK
2.	MATRIX INTERNET APPLICATIONS LIMITED	Ireland	MATRIX INTERNET
3.	DZHUNIAR ACHIYVMANT BALGARIYA	Bulgaria	JA BULGARIA
4.	STEP INSTITUT, ZAVOD ZA PSIHOLOGIJO DELA IN PODJETNISTVO	Slovenia	STEP INSTITUT
5.	JUNIOR ACHIEVEMENT YOUNG ENTERPRISE IRELAND	Ireland	JAI
6.	ADECCO ITALIA SPA	Italy	ADECCO
7.	OUTPLAYED GAMING SRL	Italy	OUTPLAYED



Executive Summary

The **DigPlay consortium** consulted **104 stakeholders in Bulgaria, Croatia, Ireland, Italy and Slovenia** to examine how digital competence is assessed in secondary and vocational education, where current approaches fall short, and whether assessment through gameplay could help. The stakeholders came from a variety of sectors, ranging from education to business and public administration; some were more active in the field of digital skills learning, whilst others were involved in assessment, research or policy development. The consultation combined a common questionnaire with expert interviews. Its purposive sample provides practical insight, but the results are not statistically representative of the five countries.

Stakeholders described digital competence assessment as fragmented and dependent on individual teachers, projects and general-purpose tools. Responses to the DigPlay concept were largely positive, particularly its potential to engage learners, reveal competence through practical tasks and provide useful feedback. Support was conditional on sound assessment design: results must reflect digital competence rather than familiarity with games. Stakeholders called for accessible and localised activities, manageable demands on teachers, clear explanations of results, and strong safeguards for consent, privacy and fairness. Business respondents placed particular value on evidence of practical skills such as evaluating information, protecting personal data, collaborating and solving problems.

These findings give DigPlay a clear direction for development and piloting. The project should co-design activities with teachers and learners, test whether gameplay provides fair and credible evidence of competence across different groups and make the resulting feedback useful for learning and guidance.



1. Methodology

1.1 Aim and design

The stakeholder survey complemented and validated the desk research carried out in each country. It was designed to capture the practical experience of people working in digital education and assessment, and their views on the DigPlay concept. All five partner countries used the same core research instrument, so results can be read at both national and aggregate level.

1.2 Data collection

A mixed-mode approach was used: a standardised, self-administered **online questionnaire** and **semi-structured expert interviews** conducted by telephone, video call or face to face. Fieldwork took place between **20 June and 25 July 2026** and was carried out by the national partner teams, supported by common methodological guidance and a standardised digital data-collection process.

The questionnaire covered:

- how digital competences of secondary and VET students are currently assessed, and which tools and policies people know of;
- challenges and barriers to assessment, and learner groups whose needs are not being met;
- reactions to the DigPlay concept and any ethical, privacy or transparency concerns;
- a dedicated business module on the digital skills needed by young people entering employment (28 respondents in Bulgaria, Croatia, Ireland and Slovenia).

1.3 Participants

Participants were deliberately drawn from a diverse group of people with relevant knowledge or practical experience. Roughly speaking, they came from schools (36%), companies (19%), universities and colleges (15%), NGOs (12%), public administration (10%), and other organisations such as software providers, training centres and independent professionals (9%). Most combined several roles relevant to digital competence, most commonly teaching digital competences in secondary or VET settings (39%), assessing them (29%), researching them (28%) or developing related policies (22%). By position, around a third described themselves as teachers, about a fifth held a leadership role such as director, principal or head of department, and the remainder were mainly managers, coordinators, consultants and academic staff.

Country	Respondents	Main institutions
Bulgaria	24	Schools, companies, NGOs, universities, state administration.
Croatia	22	Schools, universities, companies, state administration, NGOs.
Ireland	22	Schools, universities, companies, state administration, others.
Italy	14	Schools.
Slovenia	22	Companies, universities, state administration, civil society, schools.
TOTAL	104	

1.4 Analysis

Interview and open-ended answers were analysed thematically, using common categories across countries. Questionnaire data were analysed descriptively (frequencies and percentages). Findings were then compared with the desk research and with the mapping of 33 existing tools, and the most weight was given to patterns that appeared in more than one source or in several countries.

1.5 Ethics and data protection

Participation was voluntary and based on informed consent. Respondents were told the purpose of the research and how the information would be used and were guaranteed anonymity. No identifying personal data were collected; responses were analysed in anonymised, aggregated form, with access limited to the research team and data held in secure project repositories.

1.5 Limitations

The consultation targeted a specialised expert group and was not designed to be statistically representative. National samples are small and unequal in size and composition, so differences between countries should be read as indications to explore in piloting rather than firm national differences. Some questions were answered by only part of the sample (for example, 76 respondents on barriers and 28 in the business module). Fieldwork took place at the end of the academic year, when teachers and university staff were very busy.

2. Main findings

2.1 Assessing digital competence is seen as difficult

Of the 76 respondents who answered the question on barriers, **78% said there are challenges or barriers** to assessing students' digital competences, while only 4% saw none. The most frequently selected barriers are presented in Figure 1.

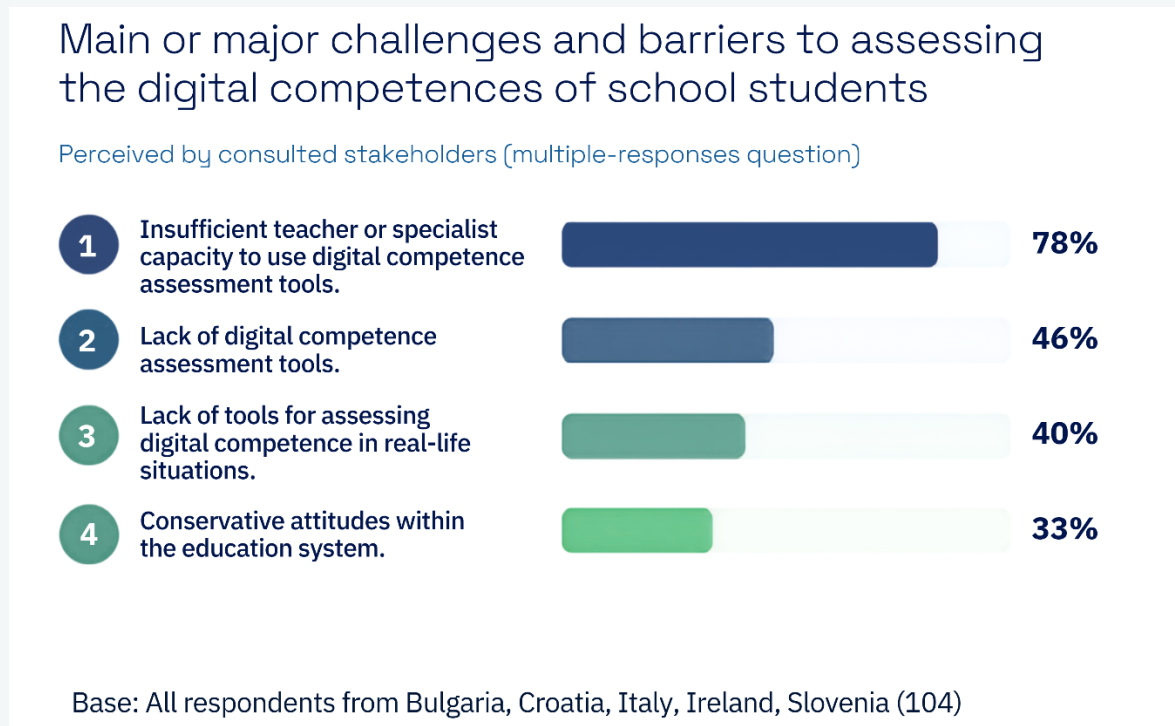


Figure 1. Main or major challenges and barriers to assessing students' digital competences, as perceived by the consulted stakeholders (n=76). Source: DigPlay WP2 stakeholder survey

Digital competence is assessed, but in a fragmented way. Among 77 respondents asked, 55% said the digital competences of secondary school students are assessed in some way, but only 39% said so for VET students, and around 40% did not know whether assessment takes place in VET. Competences such as managing digital identity, copyright and licences, and engaging in citizenship through digital technologies were among those least often reported as assessed. Interviewees described the landscape as scattered projects, teacher-designed tasks and general-purpose platforms rather than dedicated competence assessment.

Awareness of dedicated tools is limited. Of the 61 respondents asked, **31% had used an assessment tool, 23% knew of tools but had not used them, and 46% said that, as far as they knew, no such tools were available.** Where tools were named (for example SELFIE, Europass or Kahoot), they were usually self-assessment instruments or general learning platforms. Several interviewees, in Bulgaria and Slovenia in particular, warned that self-assessment can lead teachers and learners to over- or underestimate real ability.

2.2 Challenges in addressing the specific needs of learners

40% of respondents said some groups of students have digital competence needs that are not being addressed (16% said no; 45% could not say). Groups mentioned included learners with special educational

needs or disabilities, Roma and migrant learners, students from low-income households, learners in rural or remote areas and those in less well-equipped schools. Interviewees stressed that unequal starting conditions are not only about devices and connectivity, but also about exposure to technology at home, language and confidence.

2.3 Strong but conditional support for the DigPlay concept

Reactions to DigPlay concept were largely positive (see Figure 2).

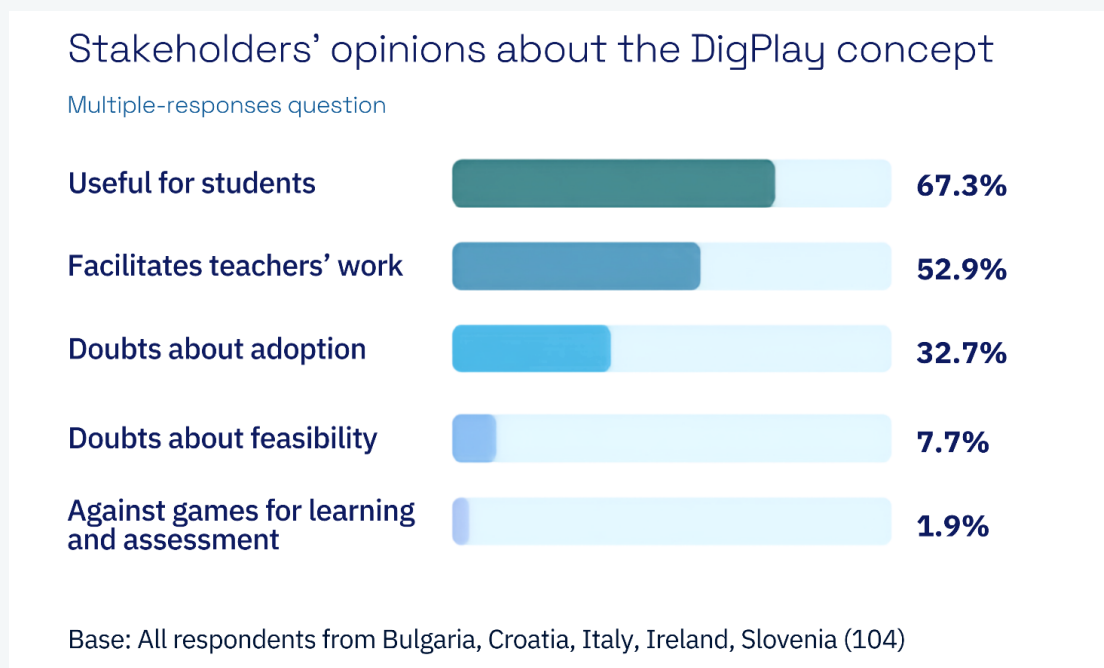


Figure 2. Stakeholders' opinions about the DigPlay concept (all respondents, n=104; multiple answers possible). Source: DigPlay WP2 stakeholder survey

Doubts were about implementation rather than the principle. Concerns about adoption were more common among Croatian and Slovenian respondents (11 of 22 in each) than among Bulgarian (5 of 24) and Irish (3 of 22) respondents, although with samples this small the differences are only indicative.

Stakeholders expect game-based assessment to make learners more engaged, to allow competence to be shown through authentic tasks, to capture transversal skills such as collaboration and problem solving that conventional tests miss, and to give useful feedback. As one Croatian respondent put it: "Gamification and invisible, non-invasive competence assessment are the keys to success."

2.4 What DigPlay needs to get right

Based on stakeholder opinion, the DigPlay project partners must address the following key challenges.

- **Assess competence, not gaming skill.** Learners who play often may be faster with controls and game conventions. Respondents asked for simple controls, clear onboarding, tasks that start from a defined competence and observable behaviour, and more than one valid way to solve a problem.

- **Keep it simple for teachers.** Teachers' time, confidence and training were the most consistent barrier. Respondents want short, practical training, ready-to-use classroom activities and results that are easy to interpret, so that DigPlay supports existing teaching rather than adding to workload.
- **Design for inclusion.** Suggestions included different proficiency levels, alternatives for learners unfamiliar with gaming, adaptations for special educational needs, and full localisation of the interface, instructions and feedback so that language does not affect results.
- **Fit into school reality.** Stakeholders raised curriculum time, school infrastructure, licensing of commercial games, funding after the pilot phase, and parents' and teachers' perception of games as "just entertainment". Presenting DigPlay as formative self-discovery rather than grading was suggested as a way to improve acceptance.
- **Give meaningful feedback.** Results should explain strengths and areas for development and suggest next steps, rather than provide only a score.
- **Co-design and pilot.** Respondents recommended involving teachers, students and assessment specialists from the start, and testing in different types of schools before wider roll-out.
- **Address AI.** In Ireland and Slovenia in particular, interviewees said assessment must be able to distinguish genuine competence from AI-assisted output, and that AI literacy is becoming part of digital competence.

2.5 Ethics, privacy and transparency

More than half (55%) of respondents saw ethical, privacy or transparency concerns in assessing digital competence through gameplay (35% did not; 11% could not say). Concern was highest in Ireland (18 of 22 respondents). Among those who had concerns (57 respondents), the issues most often selected are presented in the table below.

Issue to be addressed	Share of those with concerns
Informed consent	83%
Data protection	81%
Transparency of assessment criteria	68%
Access to student data	67%
Explanation and justification of results	65%
Fairness of the assessment	58%
Avoiding excessive tracking	56%

2.6 The business perspective

Twenty-eight respondents from business sector (in Bulgaria, Croatia, Ireland and Slovenia) answered additional questions about the skills expected of young people entering work.

- **Where it would be useful:** half saw DigPlay as applicable to assessing new recruits and job applicants, 11% to assessing existing employees, and 36% could not say. Among the 18 who rated the usefulness of a clear profile of school leavers' practical digital competences, 89% found it very or mostly useful.
- **Most important skills for entry-level hires:** protecting personal data and privacy (75%), followed by searching and filtering information, evaluating information and interacting through digital technologies (each 64%), and sharing, collaborating and identifying creative solutions (each 61%).
- **Skills new recruits most often lack:** evaluating information (54%), copyright and licences (50%) and protecting personal data and privacy (50%).
- **Skills expected to matter most in the next 3–5 years:** evaluating information (71%), creative digital problem solving (64%), collaboration and data protection (each 57%), with digital wellbeing and environmental impacts of technology each at 50%.

Business respondents valued applied, critical and responsible use of technology over narrow technical proficiency. Some of the skills they consider most important, such as evaluating information and protecting personal data, are also those where new recruits are seen as weakest. Employers were open to game-based approaches where they provide evidence of practical competence, while cautioning that any tool used in recruitment must not be too time-consuming.

2.7 National snapshots

Country	What stood out
Bulgaria	Teacher preparedness was the top challenge, especially outside ICT subjects. Respondents wanted DigComp alignment from the start, full Bulgarian localisation, clarity on long-term funding and free access, and noted that games are still seen as entertainment by some teachers and parents.
Croatia	Only 2 of the 14 respondents who answered the tools question had personally used a digital competence assessment tool. Infrastructure is now a smaller barrier thanks to the e-Schools programme; workload and resistance to change are the bigger ones. Respondents favoured assessment built into everyday learning.
Ireland	80% of education-sector interviewees (12 of 15) cited insufficient teacher expertise and training. 77% (17 of 22) thought DigPlay would be useful for students and 55% (12 of 22) for teachers. AI and the authenticity of student work were prominent themes, and education and industry voices largely agreed on future skill needs.
Italy	Participants knew of no established school-based tools for assessing digital competence in authentic situations, and described innovation as driven by motivated individuals. They were keen to link DigPlay results to career guidance within the mandatory PCTO work-related learning pathways.
Slovenia	Interviewees pointed to the lack of a shared definition of digital competence, rare and structured assessment, curriculum rigidity and the risk of game licensing limiting data access. They called for early co-design with teachers and students and for feedback that goes beyond a score. Several offered to support piloting.

3. Conclusion

The surveys point to a practical need for **better ways to recognise what young people can do with digital technologies**. Stakeholders described current assessment as uneven and often reliant on individual teachers, while business respondents emphasised applied skills that matter beyond school. **Gameplay may offer a useful setting** in which learners can demonstrate such skills, but stakeholder interest alone does not establish that the approach will assess them accurately or fairly.

DigPlay's next phase should therefore test its core assumptions in practice. Pilots should examine whether tasks capture the intended competences rather than gaming experience; whether learners with different backgrounds can participate on equitable terms; and whether teachers can use the activities and interpret the results within their available time. Clear consent, proportionate data collection and understandable assessment criteria should be built into the design from the outset. Feedback should identify strengths, development needs and useful next steps, rather than reduce performance to a score.

The survey offers informed design priorities, not representative estimates of national practice or proof of the tool's effectiveness. **Co-design and piloting across varied school settings will be essential** to determine where DigPlay adds value and what needs to change before wider use.