



“Implementation of Transformative Digital Learning in
Doctoral Program of Pedagogical Science in Latvia”
(DocTDLL) Izp-2018/2-0180



Co-funded by the Erasmus+
Programme of the European Union



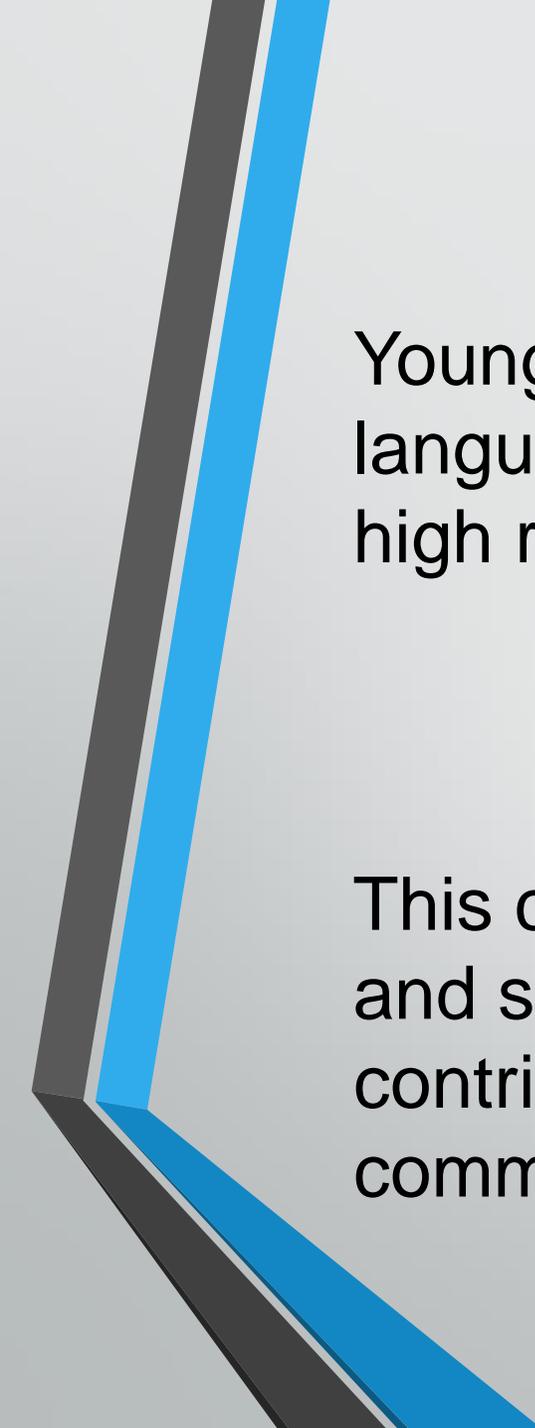
ERASMUS+ Strategic Partnership project
ERASMUS+ Strategic Partnership project “Social media marketing
skills for fostering the inclusion and employability of young people
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Social media marketing skills for fostering the inclusion of young people with disorders: Latvia experience

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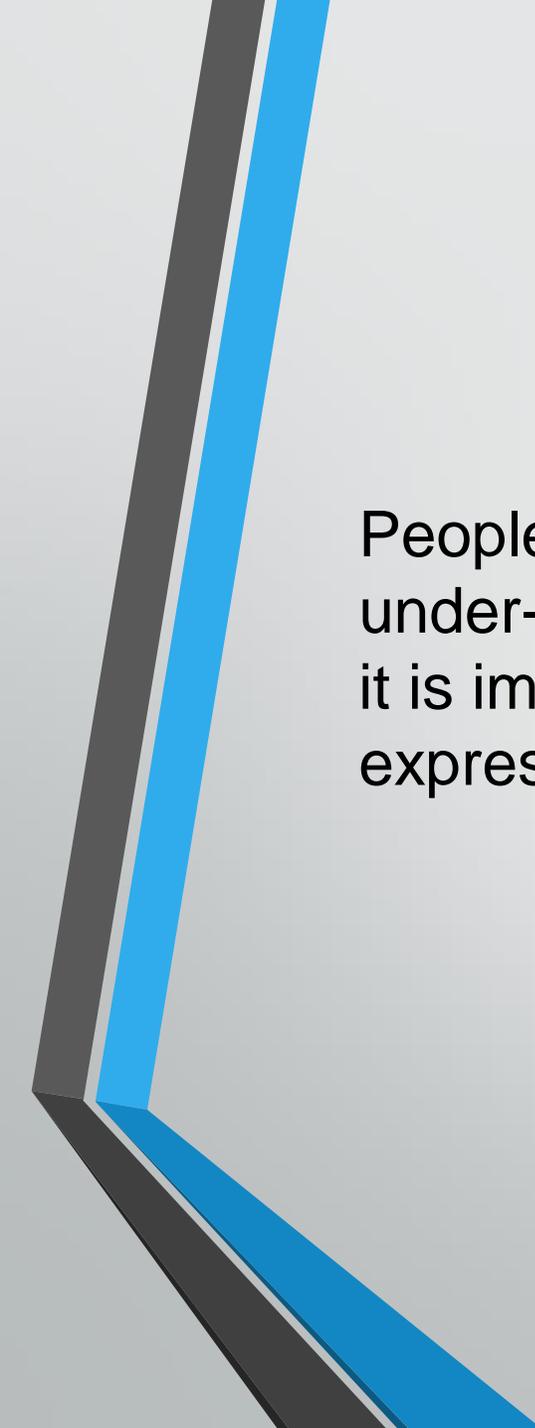
Svetlana Usca

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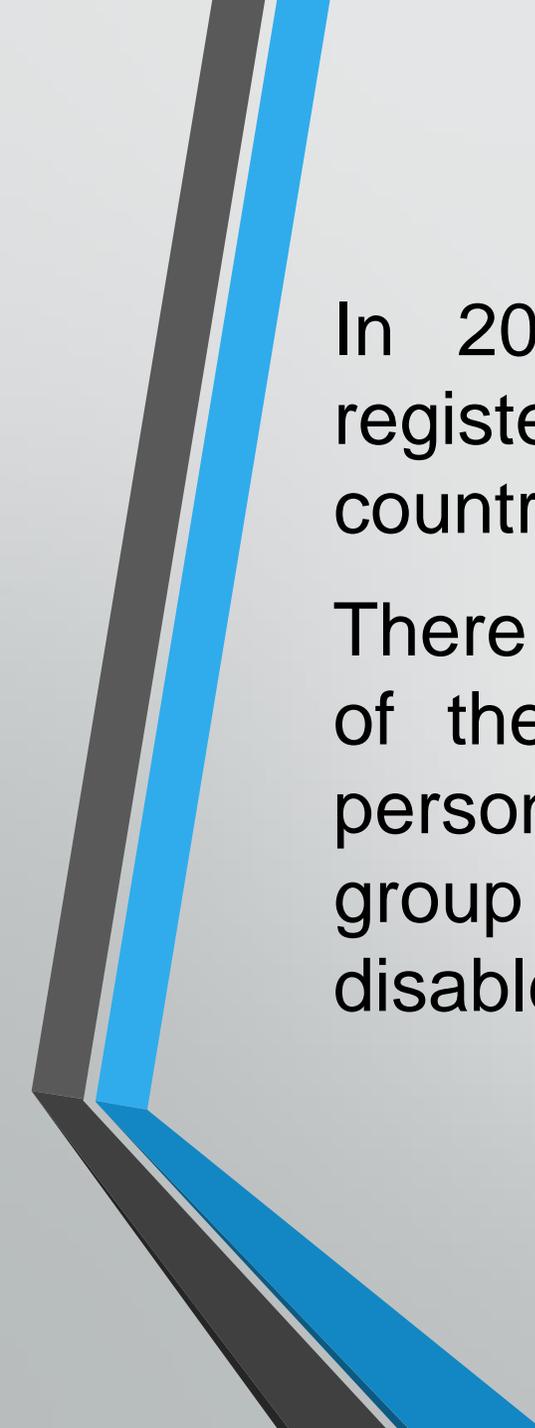


Young people with limited adaptive behavior, impaired language development and low socio-economic status are at high risk of poor socialization (Koskentausta et al., 2007).

This can be reduced through the use of digital technologies and social media, as their rapid growth and accessibility contribute to social participation and offer new means of communication for people with disabilities (Wang et al., 2017).



People with disabilities, including young people with disabilities, are under-represented on social media (Media Access Australia, 2012), and it is important to encourage and teach them to use social networks to express themselves (Hemsley et al., 2017).



In 2019, **185 548** adult persons with disabilities were registered in Latvia, i.e. 9.66% of the total population of the country.

There are **8025** persons aged 18 to 29 (young people) (4.2% of the total number of disabled persons, including 1474 persons are group I disabled persons, 3045 persons are group II disabled persons and 3506 persons are group III disabled persons)

(Labklājības Ministrija, 2019; Centrālā statistikas pārvalde, 2019)

The objective of the research is to analyze the results of exploratory research on the activity of young people with disabilities in the digital environment.

Methods: questionnaire, focus discussion.

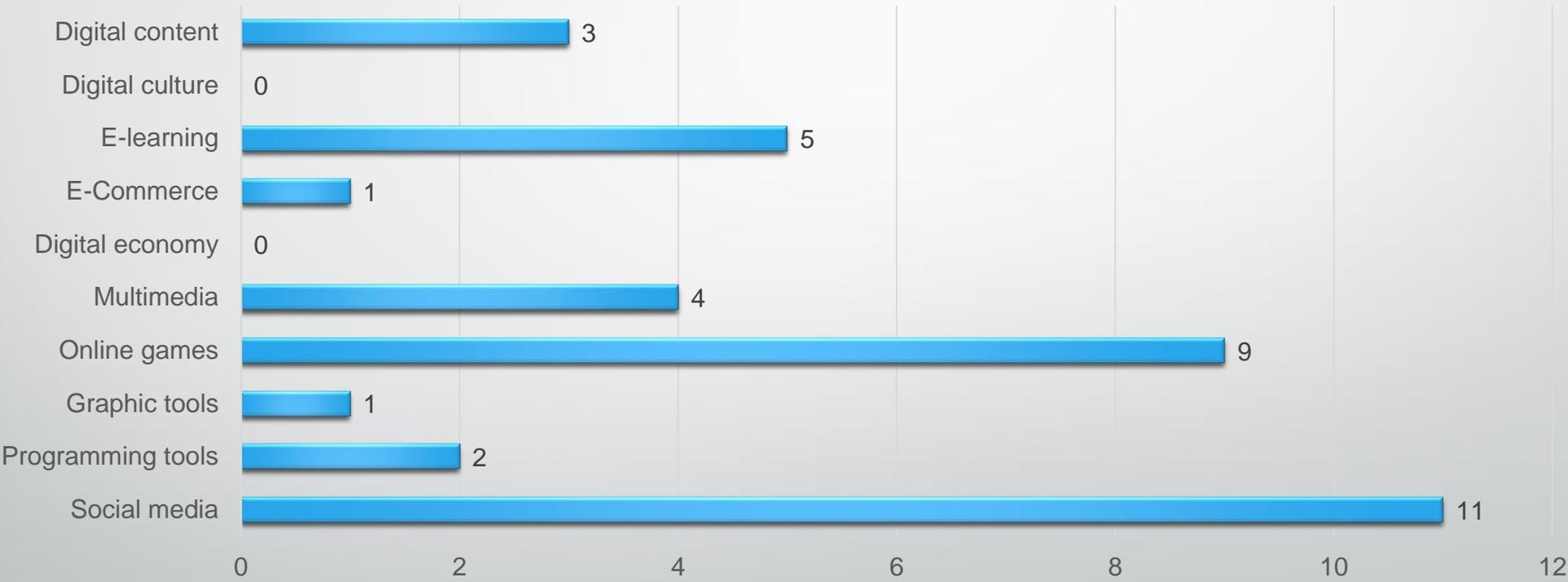


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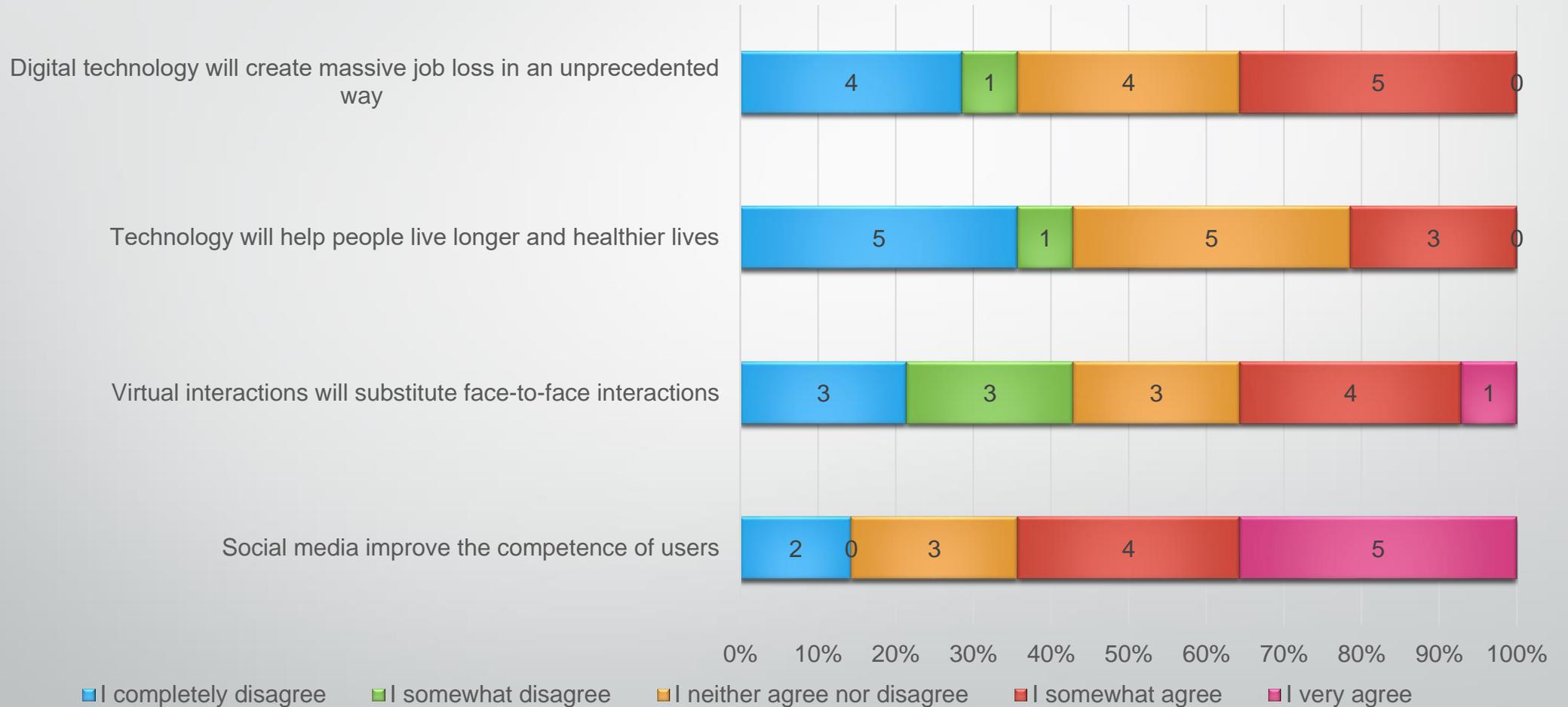
Methodology

- In the questionnaire, 14 out of 15 questionnaires were recognized as valid. 10 participants are young people with disabilities aged 21 to 30, 4 did not want to indicate age. 5 respondents are hearing impaired, 3 - disabled due to various diseases, 6 - young people with mental disorders. 8 respondents are men, 6 respondents - women. 5 respondents have secondary education, one respondent has a Bachelor's degree, and the others have primary education. 12 respondents have no work experience, 1 respondent worked less than a year, one worked from one year to 5 years. 10 respondents are unemployed, 4 are currently studying.
- In order to better understand the use of the virtual environment by young people with disabilities, focus discussions were organized with young people who participated in the questionnaire and their content analysis was performed, as a result of which the concepts were identified.

The most significant digital technologies (respondents' assessment)



Respondents' assessment of the statements



The content analysis of the focus discussions allowed identifying the positive aspects of the virtual environment:

It is an **educational environment** because:

- it allows getting the necessary information (*..I am looking for information for studies..., .. I read on Wikipedia..., .. I learn English with the help of Youtube...*);
- promotes informal education (*..I like to learn something new with the help of Youtube..., .. sometimes I am looking for how to learn something, looking for food recipes...*).

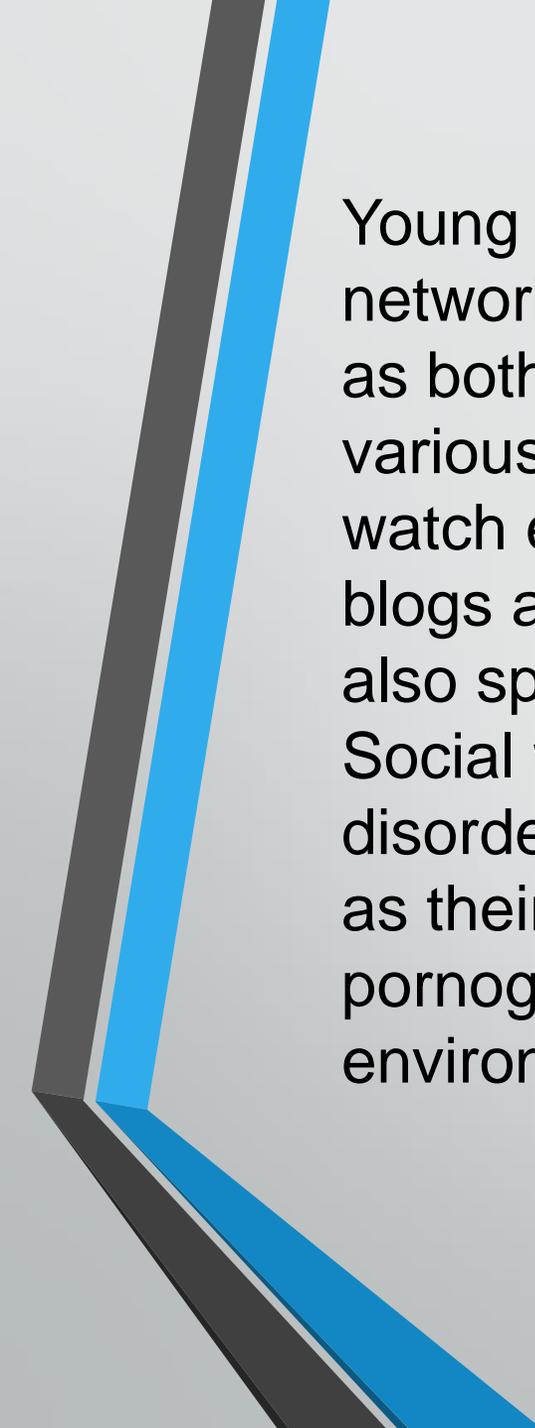
The content analysis of the focus discussions allowed identifying the positive aspects of the virtual environment:

It promotes socialization because:

- young people with disabilities can participate in various groups, forums (*..I am a member of groups on Facebook..., ..there are forums for the deaf...*), thus both gaining information and sharing experiences and opinions;
- it promotes communication with close and distant friends, acquaintances, like-minded people (*..I use it to communicate with people who are far away..., .. it would be difficult to live without the Internet, there would be no communication...*);
- it allows advertising oneself, personal services (*..I advertise my wicker baskets with the help of Faceebook...*).

The content analysis of the focus discussions allowed identifying the positive aspects of the virtual environment:

It meets the special needs of young people with disabilities (*..I learned sign language via the website..., ... there are forums for the deaf..., .I watch educational programs where there is translation in sign language ..., ..there are 3 websites with subtitles for the deaf... .. I can order goods...*). It is mentioned several times that the respondents learn to cook various simple dishes, soups, bake pancakes, set a table, etc.



Young people with disabilities associate the use of the Internet, social networks and various websites with **entertainment**, which can be seen as both a positive and a negative aspect, because young people watch various entertainment programs (.. I mostly watch movies..., cartoons .. I watch entertainment programs on youtube ... , song videos .. I watch blogs about what is happening in the world...), which is positive, but they also spend a lot of time playing games and satisfying private interests. Social worker practitioners emphasize that young people with mental disorders need support and control when using the virtual environment, as their primary interests are often related to access to various pornography websites, and their uncontrolled activities in the virtual environment can jeopardize the safety of young people with disabilities.

Limitations

Only a small part participated in the questionnaire and focus discussions, moreover, those were the most active representatives of young people with disabilities, so the results involving, for example, young people with severe intellectual disabilities, young people with mobility impairments or visually impaired (blind) people may differ.

Conclusions

Young people with disabilities in Latvia involved in research use social media for education, socialization and entertainment. In order for young people with disabilities to focus more on educational and intellectually inspiring websites, support for the development of digital competence is needed. It should be differentiated, depending on the type of disability: it could be teleworking competence for a large part of people, acquisition of business competence, for people with mental disorders - receiving services remotely, involvement in interest groups, chat, etc., taking into account personal safety. Such support and education for people with disabilities should be provided from an early age, with an emphasis on the digital environment as a learning and working environment and an opportunity for self-control and self-development.

Thank
you!!!

