

RISE: Action-Based Approach in Addressing and Mitigating Risks of Young People in Online Social Networks

Erasmus+ Programme

Project no.: 2021-1-RO01-KA220-YOU-000028688

PR1: The methodology design and implementation



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Date: 06.07.2022 | Version 2

Document Identification:

Project result <i>The methodology design and implementation</i>	
Type of result	Studies / analysis – Research study / report
Lead Partner	CLNR
Author(s)	CLNR
Dissemination level	Confidential, only for members of the consortium (including Commission services and project reviewers)
Status	Draft
Version	2

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The Methodology Design and Implementation

I. Introduction

This document details the guidelines for the desk research to be conducted by all partners within PR1 – Documentation of youth online risks at local and national levels in the RISE project: Action-Based Approach in addressing and mitigating risks faced by young people in online social networks.

The present document describes the aim of the study and the estimated results, establishing the methods, techniques, and tools that will be used for the two stages of the sociological study: desk research and field investigation. It also sets out the activities to be implemented and the responsibilities of each partner organization. The methodology discusses the steps to be followed in both the first stage of the investigation, desk research, as well as the second stage, empirical research

II. Project summary

The spread of disinformation during the COVID-19 Pandemic, especially on social media and other digital platforms, has proven to be threat for young people, as they are one of the groups most engaged in social media. The RISE project aims to address the digital transformation in the post-COVID-19 era, by focusing on the new power of social networks that was revealed during the pandemic. RISE focuses on four elements: Prevention, Identification, Mitigation, and Tools to mitigate the risks. The ultimate objective of the project is to address the digital transformation to develop capacity of young people through the innovative use of digital education content intended to enhance their online vigilance in the partner countries. The project's goal is to create a framework where young people feel safe in the online communities through developing and promoting the methodologies and services to prevent and combat the risks and implications of digitalization.

All the project activities provide for a holistic approach in empowering young people and youth work in the post-COVID-19 era. Accordingly, RISE aims to create and develop high quality learning content for youth workers and youth trainers. This priority will be covered by Project Result 3, which will create an OER aiming to train and build capacity of the abovementioned groups. The OER will be designed specifically for the needs of the project RISE. Also, PR2 will ensure the inclusion of young people in the project, and develop a service (Game) aiming to reach young people and prevent and mitigate risks of social networks. RISE aims also to enhance online vigilance of young people, and to offer them resources and tools to deal with underlying OSN threats based on real data and online research investigations. The Game will include step-by-step guides, demonstrational learning videos and an action plan to avoid online risks. Youth Workers and Youth Trainers will be involved in the project in all its phases through the development of a methodological framework, the creation of the Game, and the OER. Young people will be involved especially in PR1 and PR2 (methodology design and Game). Both target groups will be involved in the Multiplier Events, and the Final Conference. The Game and the OER will be freely accessible in different forms, which will be useful for youth education professionals.

The RISE approach will be enabled through a methodology which will increase the competences of youth workers and youth trainers, but also support young people, NGO volunteers, youth education staff, and organisation staff. This will be accomplished via the capacity building programme for youth workers

(OER) and youth trainers (Project Result 3), paired with a Joint Staff Training (C1), during which the participants will be trained on the content of the material of PR3 and the use of the Game (PR2). Together, the user-friendly Game (also in online version) and the training material will increase the quality of youth work through enhancing youth workers' online and offline practices, but also, they will prevent and mitigate the risks and implications of digitalisation associated with social media.

III. Overview of the project result

PR1 is based on the premise that online social networks and digital platforms in general have taken off during the COVID-19 pandemic. People, and youth in particular, are exploiting social media to the fullest by using various electronic devices to communicate with their friends through Mobile Apps such as WhatsApp, Telegram, Zoom, Facebook, Instagram, or for education purposes. On the other hand, the increased use of social media has brought new challenges regarding security, online risks, and disinformation. Users, and especially young people, must build a protection shield and use filtering practices on social media.

PR1 aims to gather information and create the content of the Game and the basis for the Capacity Building Programme that are going to be developed under PR2 and PR3. The objective is to improve vigilance of young people in online social networks in the partner countries, and to create a framework where young people feel safe in their online communities. This will be achieved through developing and promoting the methodologies and services to prevent and combat the risks and implications of digitalisation.

The **target groups** are:

1. Young people between the ages of 16-30, who have an online presence on social networks
2. Youth Workers and Youth Trainers, or those who aspire to become

PR1 will examine socio-demographic factors, social media use, risk perception, preventive behaviors, attitudes and other relevant factors in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Accordingly, PR1 will reveal the link between youth's offline-online vulnerability, risky behaviors online and consequences and impact of social media. It will provide for an innovative multi-layered methodology while designing a content strategy to collect and develop the digital content of the Game of PR2 and ensuring that it is in accordance with the capacity building programme (OER) of PR3. The results of PR1 will be combined with existing available information and will be analyzed.

The **innovation elements** of PR1 include:

1. Creative methods of collecting new data and adaptation to existing methodologies.
2. Creating new knowledge.
3. Creating a set of risk indicators.

Impact:

For the target group:

- Be involved in the process of information collection and sharing their views

For partners/ staff:

- Enhance their research, drafting and writing abilities
- Enhance their communication skills.
- Enhance their project management skills.

The **transferability of IO1** is ensured by delivering new knowledge and producing a comprehensive report of youth online risks, attitudes and behaviors that can be employed and applicable in other situations.

IV. Methodology of the research

The main purpose of the overall investigation is to examine the socio-demographic distinctions of youth aged 16-30, social media use, risk perception, existing preventive behaviors and attitudes in the post COVID-19 pandemic. The aim of desk research is to set the theoretical foundation of this investigation, by developing an overview of the phenomenon of youth online behavior, online risks and avenues for mitigating them, as reflected in the literature.

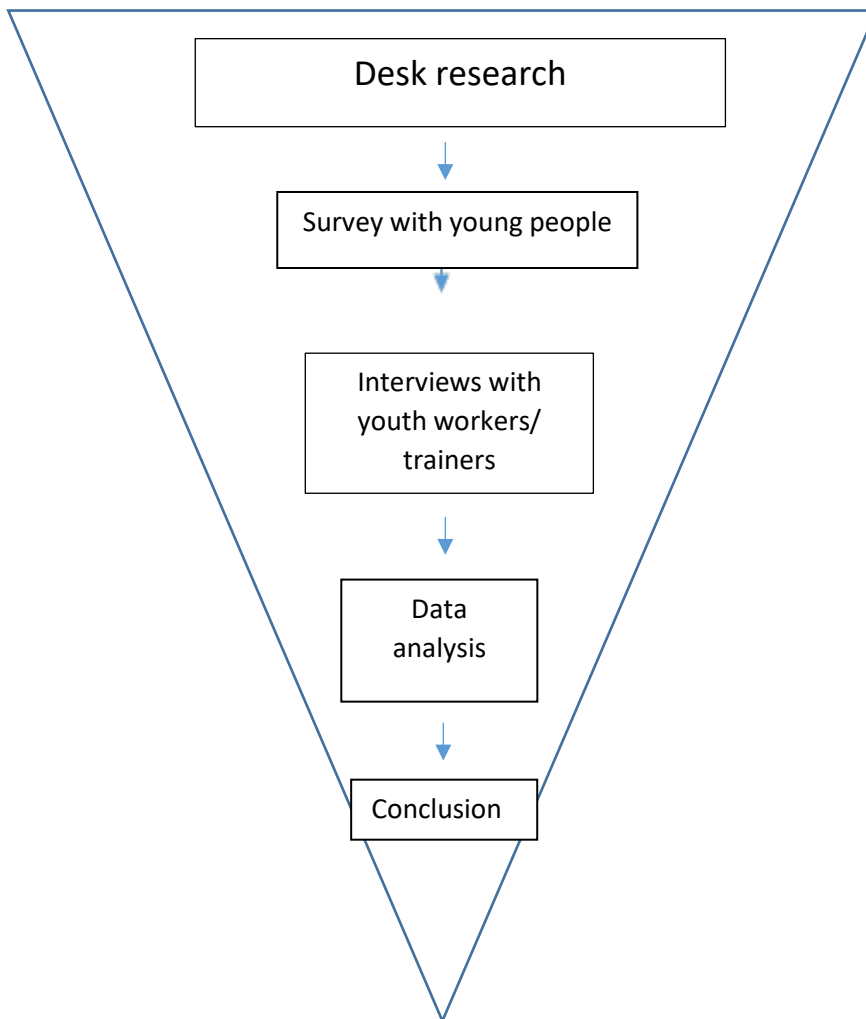
Therefore, the research will aim to:

- Examine the socio-demographic characteristics (age, gender, socio-economic status, rural/urban residence, level of education, ethnicity) of youth and their internet use and online behavior, for example:
 - whether they go online and how often
 - which are the main purposes for which they use the internet
 - what type of platforms/ websites do they use most often
 - which are their main sources of information
 - how often they interact with other users online and whether it is through public social media/ forums or through private chats.
- Explore the attitudes and behaviors of youth towards global threats, such as pandemics, international politics, armed conflicts and refugees.
- Identify the main risks associated to youth online behavior, as well as the prevalence and main patterns of manifestation of these risks.
- Analyze existing preventive and risky behavior among youth.
- Evaluate the critical reading skills of young people.
- Identify the training needs for youth and youth trainers/ workers in response to the identified risks, and formulate recommendations for mitigating these risks, through training and online games.

The analysis of the collected data will establish a set of risk factors in young people, as well as strategies and good practices in addressing the main risks identified, including: fake news, cyberbullying, revenge porn and other forms of image-based sexual abuse, online gambling and identity theft.

IV.1. Desk research

The desk research will help authors gain a deeper insight into the topic and will set the frame of the research report and data collection process. This process will allow for a deeper understanding of the subject of research and allow for an adequate framing of the questions included in the survey addressed to young people and interviews with youth workers and youth trainers. At the same time, it will outline the needs for learning and training of the two target groups.



The exploratory research will have two main components:

1. **Documentation component:** consisting of the study of *secondary sources*: research reports, studies, academic and media articles on youth online behavior and the associated risks, as well as national and international strategies targeting youth and media literacy;
2. **Empirical component:** consisting of the examination of *primary sources*: online social networks, forums, legislation, and other online sources displaying the online behavior of young people in relation to internet use and the associated risks, as well as best practices for countering these threats.

The analysis of the data obtained from these sources will be performed through a process of triangulation. The desk-research, together with the data collected through the survey and one-to-one

interviews will contribute to the documentation of the problem and to the collection of the necessary data for creating the content of the Game and the Capacity Building Programme foreseen in the project.

The desk research results will be integrated within the exploratory sociological investigation, as analysis variables within the instruments, as part of the operational definition process for establishing indicators and study dimensions. This information will be included in the third chapter of the research report, presenting the context and relevance of the empirical study and data analysis that follow.

When undertaking the desk research, the partners will focus on the following concepts: social media use, risky behavior, fake news, disinformation, cyberbullying, revenge porn and other forms of image-based sexual abuse, online gambling, identity theft, scams, training needs.

IV. 2. Online survey

After conducting the desk research, each partner organization will conduct an online survey addressed to young people in their country, on the online behavior of young people and the risks of online social networks in the post-COVID-19 era.

The survey will be conducted by using the questionnaire (see annex 1), which will be translated into the national language of each partner organization and when, necessary, adapted it to the national context.

At least 240 respondents from the 6 countries (a minimum of **40 per country**) will be recruited to answer the online survey. The survey will include questions on socio-demographic characteristics of the respondent, social media use, the level of risk that the respondent perceives, whether he or she undertakes any preventive behaviors, whether he or she engaged in certain risky behaviors, their attitudes towards current events and wide-spread conspiracy theories, their critical reading skills, as well as other relevant questions for the situation of young people in the post-COVID-19 pandemic.

IV.3. Interviews with youth workers/ trainers

Upon completing the online survey each partner organization will perform in-depth qualitative field research, by interviewing youth workers on the online behavior or youth and the risk of online social networks for young people. A total of at least 24 interviews will be conducted (**4 per country**).

The interviews will be conducted by using the interview guide (see annex 2), which will be translated into the national language of each partner organization and when, necessary, adapted to the national context.

In order to carry out this stage of the research, each partner organization will select at least 4 youth workers or youth trainers per country, from the network of each partner organization. The main criteria for selecting the interviewees will be their previous knowledge and experience on the topic of research.

Each partner organization will conduct one-to-one interviews with the respondents. The interviews can be conducted face-to-face, through video conference or via phone and will be recorded, after obtaining the consent of the interviewee. The interviewee will also be informed about his/ her rights in accordance with the GDPR.

The relevant information resulting from each interview will be transcribed and analyzed by the authors of the research.

IV.4 National country reports

At the end of the research, national country reports will be elaborated by each partner and an overall report will be created by the project coordinator. The national report will focus on the way specific risks are manifested in the respective country, and the particular vulnerabilities young people face in the national context. Each country report does not aim to merely describe the situation, but also to constitute a bridge towards the online game which will represent the second project result. By identifying the specific risks that young people face in each country, the reports will allow the developers of the online game to design situations which young people might face in real life.

The reports will include the insights gained from the secondary sources, then will focus on describing the methods for data collection and then move on to data analysis. The main section of each report will aim to create a country profile, by focusing on the specific manifestation of the phenomenon of online disinformation and on the risks young people face.

IV.5. Citations and archiving of the data

The primary and secondary sources used in the desk-research must be indexed and saved and properly referenced by the author. The citation style will be the Chicago style¹, with notes and bibliography. Authors are advised to consult both national, as well as international sources for their desk-research.

V. Role of the partners

The lead partner, CLNR will coordinate the research process and provide methodological guidance. Meanwhile, each partner will be responsible for conducting research in its country following the same methodology, and for drafting a country report. The report will be drafted in English and a summary of it will be translated into the corresponding national language.

VI. Timetable

Task no.	Description	Responsible partner(s)	Deadline
1.	Creating a blueprint for PR1 and the guidelines for the desk research, field research and country reports.	CLNR	July 6, 2022
2.	Designing a draft template of the questionnaire for the survey addressed to young people for risks on online social networks in the post-COVID-19 era. The survey will examine socio-demographic factors, social media use, risk perception, preventive behaviors, attitudes and other relevant factors of young people in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.	CLNR, with feedback from all partners	July 6, 2022
3.	Performing desk research on secondary data regarding youth online behavior and the risks associated with the use of online social networks in the post-COVID-19 era.	All partners	September 6, 2022

¹ Chicago-Style Citation Quick Guide, https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html

4.	Finalizing the template of the questionnaire, adapting it to the national context and translating it in the national language. Distributing the questionnaire online.	All partners	September 12, 2022
5.	Finalizing the survey and analyzing the data	All partners	October 10, 2022
6.	Preparing a template for the interview guide for interviews and	CLNR, with feedback from all partners	October 10, 2022
7.	Conducting one-to-one interviews with youth workers and youth trainers in all partner countries and analyzing the data	All partners	October 31, 2022
8.	Drafting a country report on the findings (including primary and secondary research).	All partners	November 18, 2022
9.	Drafting a comprehensive report with all data collected and suggestions to move forward with the Game and the OER (PR2 and PR3). The report, as well as its summary will be drafted in English.	CLNR, with feedback from all partners	December 11, 2022
10.	Translating the summary of the report into the national languages.	All partners	December 19, 2022

This document was drafted with the financial support of the European Commission. The content of the present document is the exclusive responsibility of the authors, and the National Agency and the European Commission are not responsible for the way that the information will be used.

Annex 1: Questionnaire for the survey

1. What is your age? (choose one option)
 - 16-18 years

- 19-22 years
 - 23-26 years
 - 27-30 years
2. Can you please mention your gender? *(choose one option)*
- F
 - M
 - Not specified
3. During the first trimester/ semester of this year, your household total income was: *(choose one option)* **NOTE: each partner will adapt these options, by reference to their average national income. Therefore, you need to replace these options with numbers, depending on the national average household total income. You also must choose between trimester and semester depending on the latest available data on the average income for your country)**
- significantly below the national average
 - a little below the national average
 - around the national average
 - slightly above the national average
 - considerably above the national average
4. Your area of residence is: *(choose one option)*
- NOTE: each partner will adapt these options, by reference to the number of inhabitants from their cities (eg. Over 1.000.000 inhabitants, between 500.000 - 1.000.000 inhabitants etc.)**
- Big city
 - Small or medium city
 - Town
 - Village
5. Which is your highest educational program completed: *(choose one option)*
- No formal education
 - Elementary education or less
 - High school education
 - University education
 - Post-graduate education
6. Please mention your occupational status:
- student
 - employee
 - self-employed/ independent professional
 - stay at home parent
 - not employed

7. What is your ethnicity (*choose all relevant options*) **NOTE: each partner will adapt these options, by reference to their national context in terms of ethnic minorities.**
- Romanian/ Greek/ Italian/ Finnish/ German/ Turkish
 - Roma
 - Hungarian
 - Other
 - I prefer not to say
8. How often do you access the internet? (*choose one option*)
- Never
 - Once a month
 - Once a week
 - Several times in a week
 - Daily
9. Did you ever provide the following information to a person from the internet which you have never met in person and with whom you do not have an institutional affiliation: (mark as many options as applicable)
- a. Identification information (name, ID number, etc.)
 - b. Information about your location (home address etc.)
 - c. Information about your personal/ intimate life
 - d. Intimate photos or videos
 - e. Other type of personal or sensitive information
 - f. No, none of the above
10. Did you ever provide intimate information, photos or videos to a friend or partner online?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
11. Have you ever been a victim of the following incidents when accessing the internet (*choose all relevant options*):
- a. Online harassment or trolling (repetitive inflammatory comments posted online in order to upset you)
 - b. Online threats
 - c. Outing/Doxing (having your intimate/ sensitive information shared without your consent)
 - d. Revenge porn (having your intimate pictures published without your consent)
 - e. Identity theft
 - f. Cyberstalking (being repeatedly followed by someone online)
 - g. Cyberbullying
 - h. Having false statements posted online in your name by another person
 - i. Other incidents
 - j. No, none of the above

12. What do you generally do online? (*choose all relevant options*)

- Reading the news about politics and current events
- Watching movies or listening to music
- Chatting with friends and family
- Participating in online discussions on forums, blogs, groups, etc.
- Looking up information
- Participating in educational programs or working from home
- Shopping
- Searching for friends or partners
- Playing games
- Gambling
- Blogging or Vlogging
- Other

13. Did you engage in online gambling over the past two years:

- Yes, more than once a week
- Yes, about once a week
- Yes, about once a month
- Yes, several times or less
- No

14. What type of social network platforms do you use on a regular basis? (*choose all relevant options*) – **each partner can add national platforms to the list**

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Instagram
- TikTok
- Other
- None

15. How often do you read the news about politics and current events? (*choose one option*)

- Daily
- Once every few days
- Once a week
- Once a month
- Never

16. When reading a piece of news, how thorough do you usually read?

- I only screen the title and/ or the picture
- I read the title and the first paragraph
- I read the whole article

17. In terms of political orientation, do you consider yourself:

- Extreme right-wing
- Moderate right-wing
- Extreme left-wing
- Moderate left-wing
- Apolitical/ not interested in politics
- I don't know

18. Do you comment on news platforms? If so, how often? *(choose one option)*

- Every day
- Every few days
- Once a week
- Once a month
- Never

19. What are your top three sources of information on politics and current events?
(choose 3 from the list)

- International news platforms
- National news platforms
- Local/ regional news platforms
- Friends, colleagues or family
- Social networks
- Online chat groups/forums/dedicated channels
- Other

20. How often do you interact with other users online through public social media:
(choose one option)

- Every day
- Once or twice a week
- Less than once a week
- Less than once a month
- Never

21. How often do you interact with other users online through private chats: *(choose one option)*

- Every day
- Once or twice a week
- Less than once a week
- Less than once a month
- Never

22. The COVID-19 pandemic makes you: *(choose one option)*

- Very anxious
- Somewhat anxious

- Not anxious at all
23. The war in Ukraine makes you: *(choose one option)*
- Very anxious
 - Somewhat anxious
 - Not anxious at all
24. Please rate the accuracy of the following statement: Covid-19 was deliberately created by a state government in a laboratory in order to control world population
- Highly accurate
 - Somewhat accurate
 - Neutral
 - Unlikely to be accurate
 - Not accurate at all
25. Please rate the accuracy of the following statement: Covid-19 vaccines can cause infertility.
- Highly accurate
 - Somewhat accurate
 - Neutral
 - Unlikely to be accurate
 - Not accurate at all
26. Please rate the accuracy of the following statement: The crimes in Bucha and Irpin, Ukraine were staged by the Ukrainian government in order to order to receive Western aid.
- Highly accurate
 - Somewhat accurate
 - Neutral
 - Unlikely to be accurate
 - Not accurate at all
27. Please rate the accuracy of the following statement: Most Muslim immigrants from the Middle East are likely to be involved in criminal/ terrorist acts.
- Highly accurate
 - Somewhat accurate
 - Neutral
 - Unlikely to be accurate
 - Not accurate at all
28. Please rate the accuracy of the following statement: Global warming is not real, but it is used as a pretext by Global elites to control global resources
- Highly accurate
 - Somewhat accurate

- Neutral
- Unlikely to be accurate
- Not accurate at all

29. Please read the following statement and choose the correct statements about it from the list:

“While most of the Beryslav district in the southern Kherson region remains under Russian control, several villages have been liberated — including Novovorontsovka on the Dnipro river — according to Dmytro Slyvchenko, head of the district council. The village had 6,500 people before the war, but the population has gone down to only 400, he said. “People have already started to come back to these liberated villages, to their homes, and started renovating their damaged houses, even though there is still shelling from the occupiers from time to time,” Slyvchenko added.”

- Dmytro Slyvchenko is speaking on behalf of the Russian army
- Novovorontsovka is a village in the Beryslav district
- The shelling comes from the Ukrainian army
- Novovorontsovka is still under Russian control
- Most of the Beryslav district is still under Russian control

Annex 2: Interview guide

1. First of all, please tell us a few words about your experience of working with young people: what type of activities do you perform, experience in the field and ages of those you are working with.
2. How would you describe the online behavior of young people (16-30 years old) in our country? Have you observed any difference among age groups.
3. In your opinion, how did the Covid-19 pandemic influence youth online behavior?
4. From your experience, what determines young people to share their personal information online with unknown people? By personal information, we mean: identification information (name, ID number, etc.), information about their location (home address etc.), information about their personal/ intimate life, intimate photos or videos, other type of personal or sensitive information.
5. How about sending intimate media content (pictures, videos) to their intimate partners online or by phone?
6. In your experience, how often do young people fall victims to online incidents such as: online harassment or trolling, online threats, outing/doxing (having their intimate/ sensitive information shared without their consent), revenge porn, identity theft, cyberstalking, cyberbullying, having false statements posted online in their name or others?
7. What do you think determines young people to engage in online gambling and how often does this become an addiction?
8. What is the level of media use and media literacy of the young people that you work with (meaning how often do they read the news, how thoroughly they read and how clear do they understand the information)?
9. How would you evaluate the level of critical thinking of the young people that you work with?
10. Why do you think young people fall victims to online misinformation/ fake news?
11. What kind of information or training do you think young people need to avoid these risks? Please address each risk individually.
12. Do you know any project or initiative which aims to help young people avoid these risks? If so, please elaborate.

Annex 3: Template for the national reports

I. Introduction (450-850 words)

- general information on the topic of the report (summarized)
- objectives of the research, addressing the following research questions:
 - How can we characterize the online behavior of youth?
 - Which are the main risks associated to youth online behavior, their prevalence and main patterns of manifestation?
 - What are the main preventive and risky behavior among youth?
 - Which are the training needs for youth and youth trainers/ workers in response to the identified risks and how can we best address these risks, through training and online games?
- roadmap of the report
- mention of the project (name, financing authority and contract number)

II. Methodology (400-650 words)

- Description of the field research: survey and interviews, responding to the following questions:
 1. What type of primary data was collected?
 2. How and when was the online primarily data collected?
 3. How many persons participated in the survey and interviews?
 4. What group do they belong to?
 5. How were they selected?
 6. When was the research carried out and how (online, in persons, by phone etc.)?
 7. How was the data obtained in the field research analyzed?

III. Literature review (1500-2000 words)

- Documentation of the subject, based on primary (legislation/ strategies, online forums and platforms) and secondary sources (articles, reports, books etc.) and legislation
- Brief mentioning of the international context
- In-depth analysis of the national context

IV. Main findings of the research (3500-4000 words)

- Description and analysis of the data obtained from primary sources online (legislation, groups, forums etc.)
- Description and analysis of the data obtained from the survey with young people
- Description and analysis of the data obtained from interviews with youth workers/trainers

V. Conclusions and recommendations (600-1000 words)

- national level conclusions of the research
- the training needs for youths in response to the identified risks
- recommendations in terms of the design, content and promotion of the online game for the mitigation of the identified risks.