



# development of youth information and counselling services in Ukraine: a survey report

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in collaboration with  
the European Youth Information and Counselling Agency



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The opinions expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the views of the Council of Europe.



Authors of this report have put their best effort for the accuracy of the facts presented in it. However, they cannot take the full responsibility for them. Authors and ERYICA are anytime grateful for remarks for improvement.

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# 1. Introduction

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The European Youth Information and Counselling Agency (ERYICA), and its member organisations, have established a strong network of youth information and counselling services across Europe throughout the last few decades.

The aim of youth information and counselling services is to **provide comprehensive and reliable information to young people** according to the principles of the European Youth Information Charter. To evaluate the service quality and to understand the perception of young people towards youth information and counselling services, ERYICA conducted a survey for service users back in 2013 with some support from the European Pool of Youth Researchers and the Council of Europe. At the end of 2017, a new survey was conducted across Europe in the framework of the *Erasmus+ KA2 Project Future Youth Information Toolbox*. This time the aim was to study information behaviour and experiences across Europe with youth information and counselling of both users and non-users of the services. In the process, the survey strived to reveal the most preferred sources of information, the perceived reliability of sourced information, preferred presentation form and media, and young people's trust in youth information and counselling services.

With the same view, this report obtained the replies of participants from Ukraine in the FYIT survey 2017. The objective of this report is to emphasise the responses that the Ukrainian population produced in the survey in order to better inform the activities that ERYICA is conducting with the Ministry of Youth and Sports of Ukraine in the framework of the Partnership Agreement between the Council of Europe and ERYICA. The first phase of the survey began on 1 November and closed on 14 December 2017 in line with the Erasmus+ project deadlines. A second collection phase was initiated on 15 December and continued until 9 February 2018 in the framework of the grant agreement between ERYICA and the Council of Europe. The report focuses on the Ukrainian responses and compares them with the European average<sup>1</sup> to address the differences. This will help understand the distinct information behaviour of young people in Ukraine and assist policy-makers and the youth sector in designing national youth information and counselling services and policies suitable and appropriate for the relevant stakeholders.

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<sup>1</sup> Future Youth Information and Counselling: Building on Information Needs and Trends (Åbo Akademi University & ERYICA in the framework of the Erasmus+ KA2 project Future Youth Information Toolbox; 2018)

## 2. Background

### 2.1. What is youth information?

*Enabling greater access to independence.* Youth information and counselling seeks to **inform and accompany young people** on the delicate path to adulthood; a transitory and challenging period. In this relatively short time, young people are expected to make a myriad of important decisions that will no doubt be highly influential in their future. These first-time decisions need to be based on **unbiased, complete and comprehensive information**. Often faced with dilemmas, young people turn to various sources of information, one of these being youth information and counselling services.

Generalist youth information and counselling work covers **all topics that interest young people**, and can include a spectrum of activities. The term “youth information and counselling” can encompass a wide range of services and activities, such as informing, counselling, supporting, coaching, training, peer-to-peer, networking, or referral to specialised services. The services can be set in different frameworks and provided by many different actors through various media. The essential aim of youth information and counselling is to engage and empower young people by **guiding them in their autonomous decision-making**. It builds on the fact that it is not possible to make a sound decision without knowing one’s options and alternatives. Youth information aims to guarantee **the right of young people to full and reliable information**, regardless of nationality, sex, religion or social situation. The [European Youth Information Charter](#) establishes the minimum standards for youth information and counselling services according to nine principles: Independent, Accessible, Inclusive, Needs Based, Empowering, Participative, Ethical, Professional and Proactive.

#### **Youth Information aims (among other objectives) to:**

- Provide reliable, unbiased, accurate and youth-friendly information;
- Facilitate access to different sources and channels of information;
- Give an overview of options available on topics relevant to young people;
- Help young people to navigate the information overload of modern day society;
- Ensure that young people know their rights, services available and how to access them;
- Support young people in evaluating the available information and its quality;
- Guide young people to find the best options available to them and make their own decisions;
- Offer different channels of communication and dialogue to directly support young people in their search for information and knowledge; and
- Educate in media and information literacy.

*Finding your place in society.* The aim of youth information and counselling is not only to meet the needs of the general public – its principal objective – but also to anticipate their needs and prepare **preventative measures** accordingly. Some of these needs will relate to key issues in society, notably, physical and mental health, high-risk behaviour, interpersonal relationships, discrimination, citizenship, active participation in society and access to social rights. Only by being adequately informed about one’s rights and duties is it possible to find a place in society and be a well-informed citizen.

*Creating an information culture.* Today, young people are **inundated with information** and **exposed to a variety of different media**. This access to information is unprecedented and brings with it a previously unseen tendency to also want to create media content, often in a personal and uncontrolled manner. In order to be a conscious citizen, it is important that one looks at this content with a critical eye, evaluating the quality, reliability, strategy and interest of those producing the information (Landy & Le Tellier, 2016). In this context, youth information and counselling services take on a new aim; **to educate young people on media and information literacy**. Youth information services are fully equipped to advise young people on how to research, evaluate and appreciate information and how reliable it is. For this reason, media and information literacy occupies an important part of youth information and counselling work.

## 2.2. Policy and historical background

The right to information has been recognised in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and in the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

**Youth Information** was established as a model in the late 1960s and then extended throughout Europe in the 1970s and 1980s. The European Youth Information and Counselling Agency (ERYICA) was born out of this in 1986, when the Council of Europe brought together a committee of expert professionals in youth information. This committee helped to extend the youth information model into a network of local and national structures, which today form an **integral element of youth work in many countries**. Today, ERYICA is composed of some **36 structures** of youth information and counselling spread across **27 countries**.

In 1990, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe issued a recommendation concerning information and counselling for young people in Europe (Recommendation No. R(90) 7), which gave the issue of information and counselling for young people a significant new importance and provided a first European document to rely on and refer to, not only for politicians and decision-makers, but also for youth information services at all levels (this recommendation was updated in 2010 with Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)8. More recently, Recommendation CM/Rec(2016)7 of the Council of Europe on Young People's Access to Rights also highlights the right to information as a basis for accessing other rights.

In 1993, ERYICA adopted the first version of the **European Youth Information Charter**, which describes the underlying values, principles and working guidelines for the part of youth work that relates to youth information. The Charter was revised and updated in 2004, and more recently in 2018.

Another major development concerning youth information was the **White Paper on youth**. Announced to the European Parliament at the end of 1999 and published by the European Commission in 2001, the White Paper, called "A New Impetus for European Youth", identified **youth information as one of four key priorities**. The EU Youth Strategy 2010-2018 recognised the importance of youth information and counselling services and specifically listed the development of quality standards on youth participation, information and consultation as a separate field of action aimed at ensuring full participation of youth in society (Ivanovskis and Rupkus 2015). More recently, the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027 refers to the need of embracing a more systematic approach to quality youth information, outreach and dissemination building on existing networks (European Commission, 2018).

Over time, youth information has had to adapt to changing societies, technological and media and information developments, the difficulties that young people come across as they try to find their place in society, and a growing demand for guidance. Nowadays the sector continues to evolve and adapt. Young people today do not face the same challenges as young people ten or even five years ago, and they do not seek information and guidance in the same way, nor on the same topics. Therefore, it is crucial for youth information and counselling services to be up-to-date and aware of the ways in which young people access information, ensuring that the information and counselling provided corresponds to their needs. It is for this reason that the *Future Youth Information Toolbox* carried out the survey on identifying the needs, trends and relevant topics of young people across Europe, and to contribute to **empowering an autonomous and well-informed generation of young people**.

## 3. Methodology and sample

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A total of 248 individuals took part in the survey and 101 complete responses were collected. Complete response rate was 41%, which was close to the European average of **45%**. **Out of the 101 respondents, 68 were users while 33 were non-users.** The presentation of survey data is on a descriptive level, giving mainly the percentages on how the respondents perceive youth information services, reliability of information sources and their ability to evaluate information. In the following sections, we will discuss the demographics, usage experience and information behaviour of the users and the non-users.



## 4. Youth Information and Counselling Services

This section discusses the general demographics of the respondents that participated in the survey. The questionnaire collected information about gender, age, education, residence and current education and life status.

### 4.1. Demographics

#### 4.1.1. Age and Gender

**Out of 68 users, 14 were male while 53 were female**, 1 replied other. Out of the 33 non-users, 17 were female and 16 were male. Like the European picture, the Ukrainian population was also predominantly female. However, unlike the European survey majority, where 46% of users were between 18 and 24, **67% of those who participated in the survey were between the ages of 19 and 29 years old, and 57% over 25 years old**. The age composition of the non-users was quite similar to the users. This means that the age composition is largely different from the overall European group, where 69% were within the ages of 12 and 18 years old. It can be concluded that this predominantly female respondent group is not particularly young. While the European average was 12 to 24, in the Ukrainian sample it was 19 to 29.

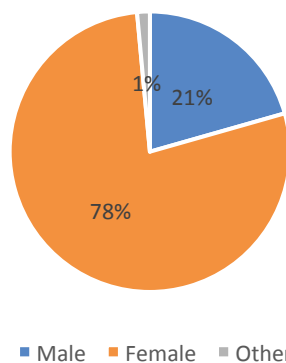


Figure 1: Gender of the users (%)

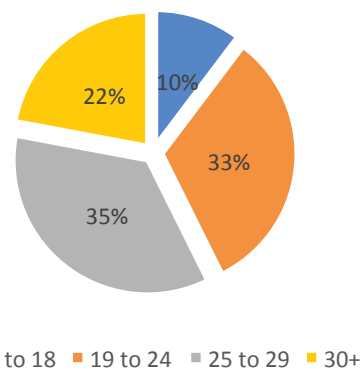


Figure 2: Age of the users (%)

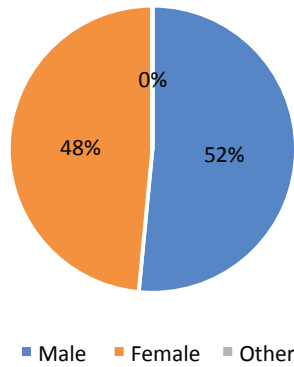


Figure 3: Gender of the non-users (%)

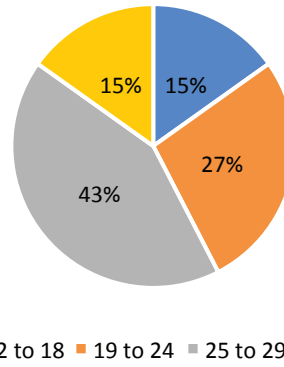


Figure 4: Age of the non-users (%)

### 4.1.2. Current residence of the users

Along with the age of the respondents, their area of current residence was collected. To avoid specific addresses, four categories were given as choices, which were: large city, medium-sized city, small town and rural area or village. The determinant of the size of a city was its population. Cities with a population over 50,000 were considered large cities, while below that size was considered as medium-sized, cities with a population of below 10,000 were considered small towns, and areas with a population below that range were considered as rural areas or villages.

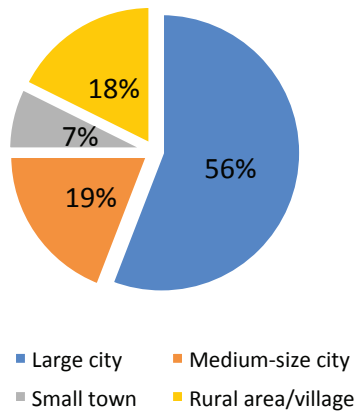


Figure 5: Current residence of the users (%)

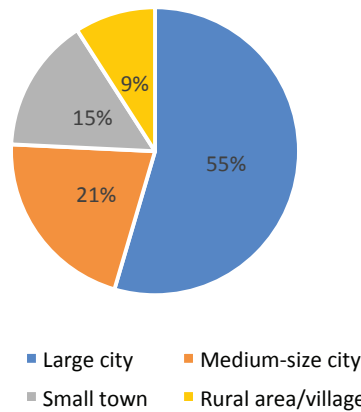


Figure 6: Current residence of the non-users (%)

We collected information from users coming both from large cities and relatively smaller towns or rural areas. Over 55% of users are currently residing in large cities. Such a trend is unsurprising, since both education and possible job opportunities attract young people from all over the country. Like the users group, 55% of the entire non-users group reside in large cities. In the European group it was 34%. Against the 25% coming from the rural sides, in this group it was 9%.

### 4.1.3. Postal Codes

To understand the geographical dispersion of the 101 respondents that participated in the survey, we have plotted the postal codes they provided as their current address. The following figure shows the different areas the participants currently reside.

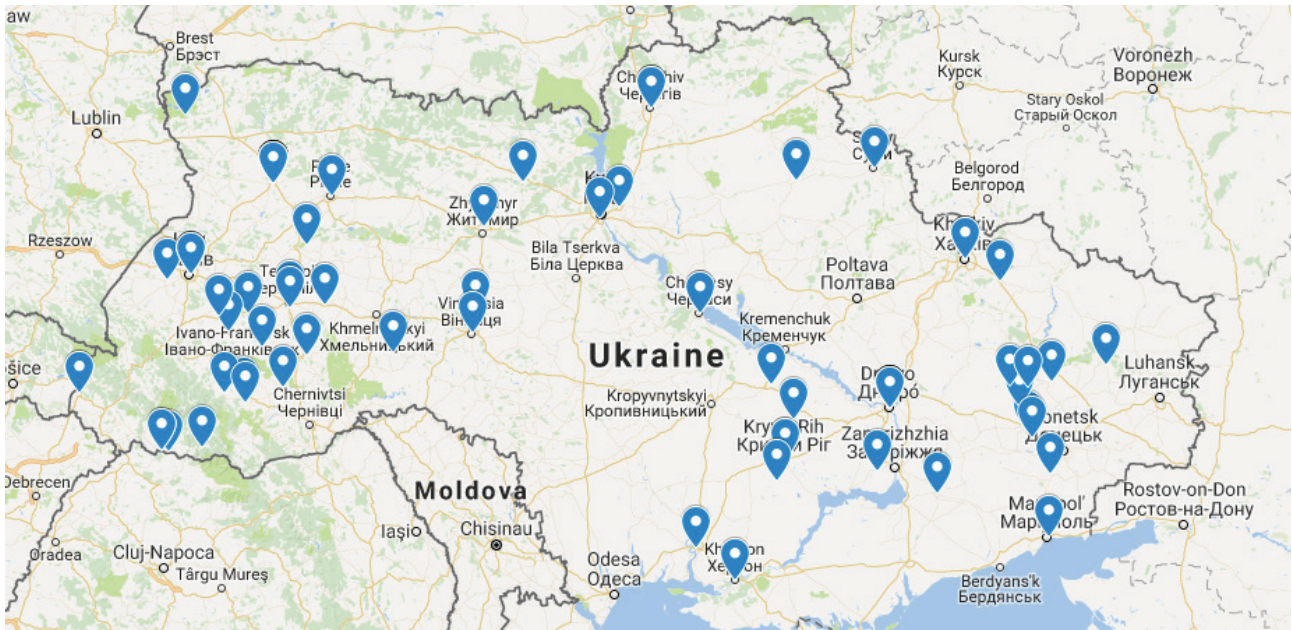


Figure 7: Location of all respondents from Ukraine

After plotting the locations on the map of Ukraine, it was observed that the geographical locations of the sample group was quite dispersed. Nevertheless, **more density was observed in the south western and south eastern parts of the country**. The south western part includes cities such as: Lviv, Ternopil, Ivano-Frankivsk, Khmelnytskyi. The other cities from the south eastern part are: Kryvyi Rih, Zaporizhzhia, and Donetsk. The respondents were mostly from the urban areas of the country.

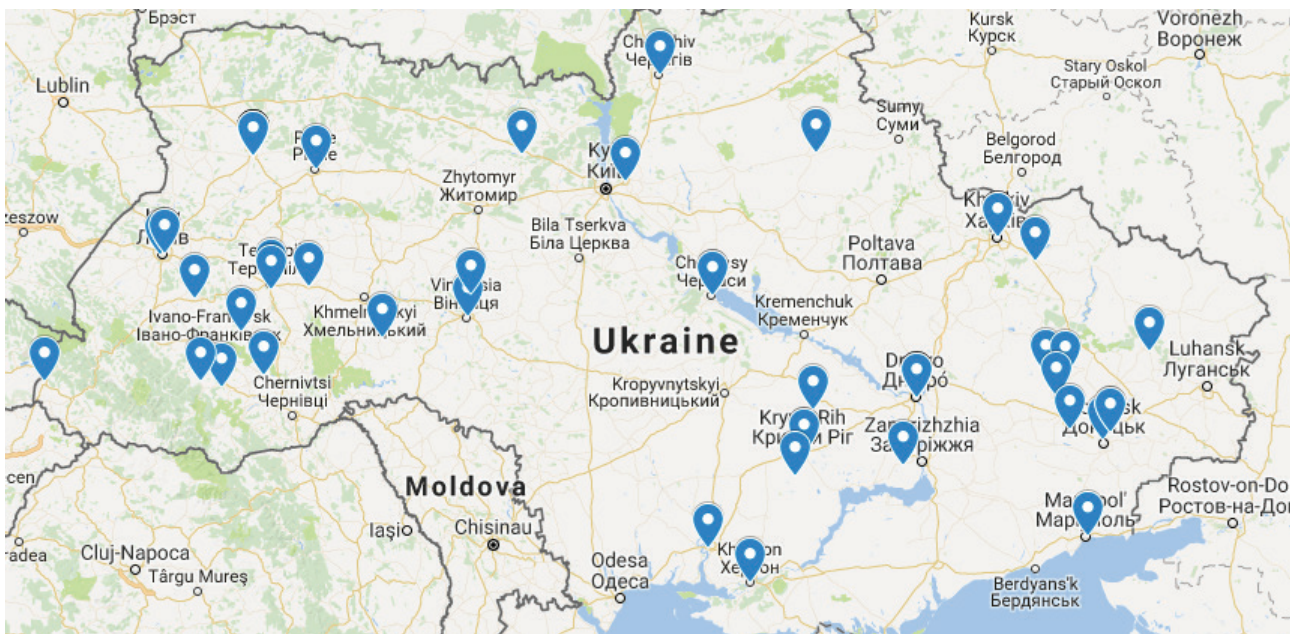


Figure 8: Location of the users from Ukraine



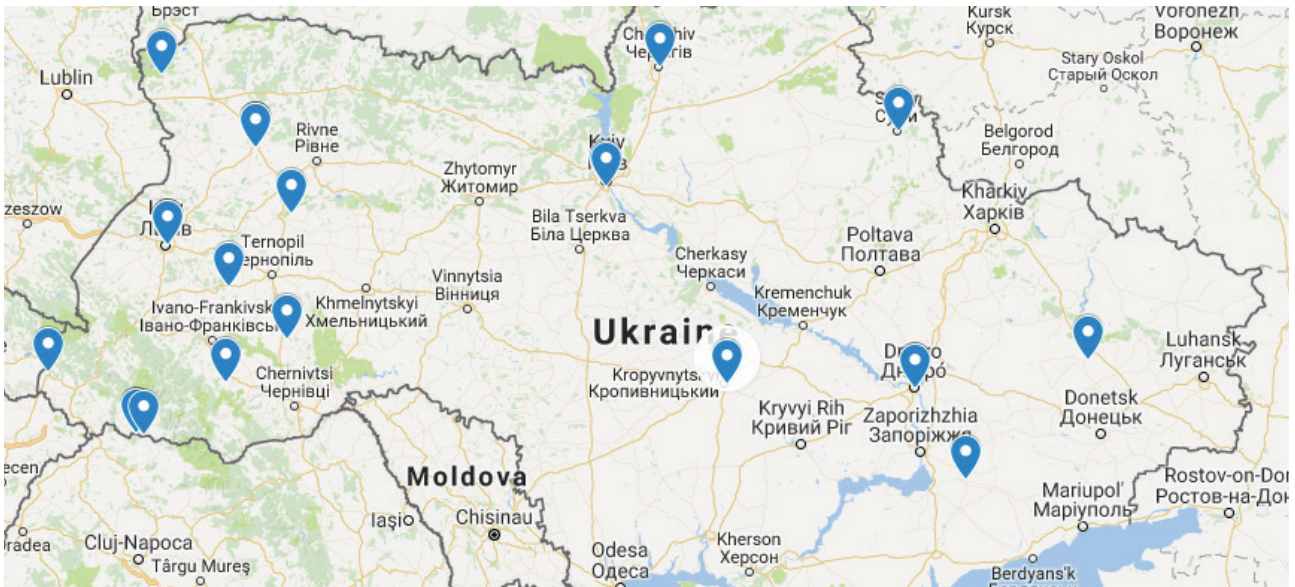


Figure 9: Location of the non-users from Ukrainian

The geographical locations of the users and the non-users can reveal insights about their choices. However, in order to draw a conclusive effect of geographical location, a bigger sample would be more appropriate.

#### 4.1.4. Educational attainment of users

The educational qualification of the participants was another key attribute that was collected within the survey. The educational parameters ranged from lower primary schools to Master’s degree or higher. **Figure 7 and Figure 8 show a majority of the respondents have completed higher education.**

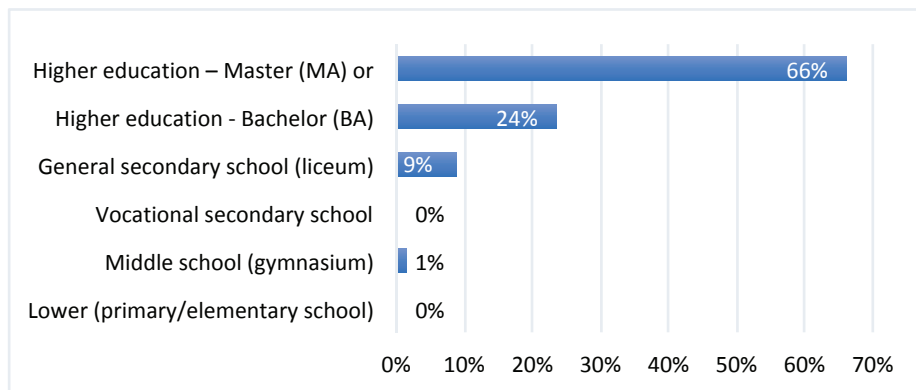


Figure 10: Educational qualifications of the users (%)

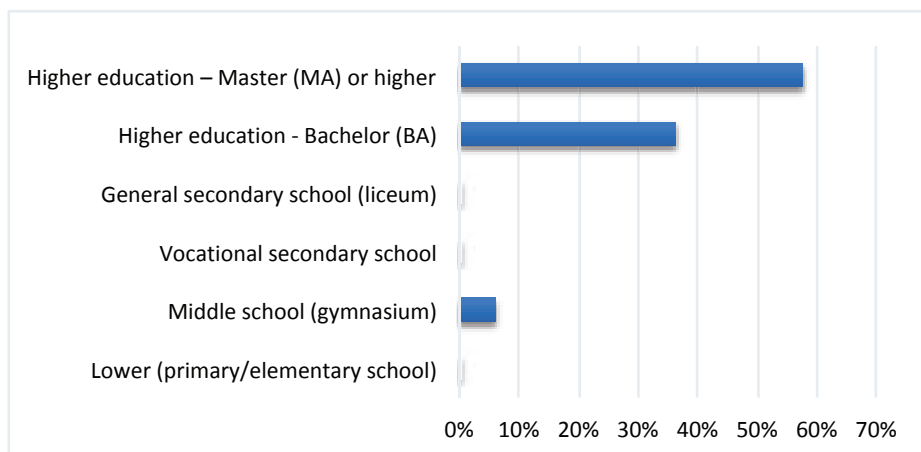


Figure 11: Educational qualifications of the non-users (%)

Of the 68 users, **around 66% are Master's level graduates and 24% in Bachelor's level**. The same pattern is seen within the non-users group. This is a large difference between the European sample group and the Ukrainian sub group. For example, over 50% of the European sample group was enrolled in middle school to secondary school and only 14% were studying at Master's level, which might have various implications. In the European study, it was observed that half of the non-users had already completed elementary to middle school level. Out of 1,429 non-users, 15% had attended vocational schools and 20% had attended secondary school. The Ukrainian group is substantially older than both the users and non-users in the European survey. This indicates possible differences in choices and needs. These will be discussed at length in the following phases in connection to other variables.

#### 4.1.5. Current status

The last individual demographic characteristic was the life situation (socio-professional status) of the participants. **The population largely comprised of working individuals, over 50% of the 68 users are working**, which was only 20% in the overall European sample group.

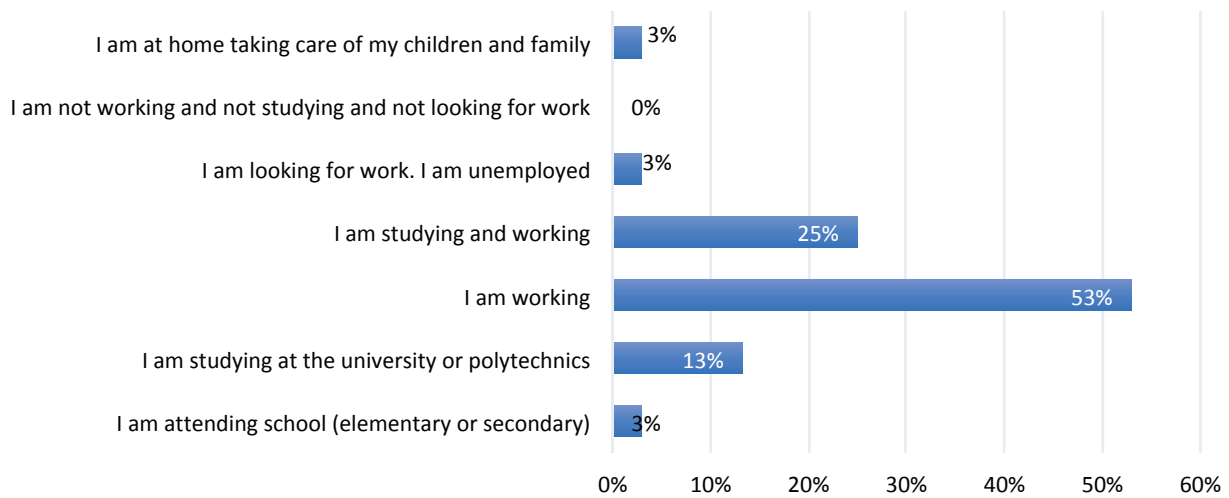


Figure 12: Life situation (socio professional status) of the users (%)

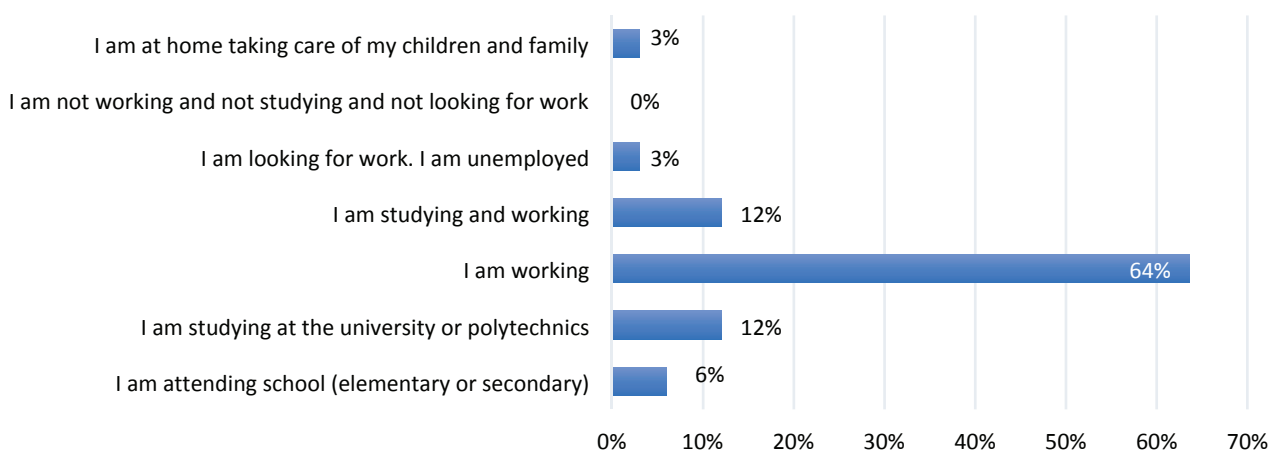


Figure 13: Life situation (socio professional status) of the non-users (%)

To synopsise the demographics of the users of the Ukraine sample group: we are looking at a group of **mostly female individuals aged between 19 to 24 and who have completed higher education and are currently employed**. This is distinctively different from the majority of the overall European sample. However, this will help us obtain insights about urban dwelling educated young adults and their information behaviour.

The general concentration of higher education institutions and more job opportunities explains the trend of young people residing in large or medium cities. They have adequate awareness about youth information and counselling services available and have used them as well. The age, residence, gender, educational qualification and current socio-professional status, collectively, will help us to better understand the trends in the answers regarding service quality and media and information literacy. The connection between the result and the demographics of the respondents will also help to design and structure the future expansion of services and assist more young people in accessing youth information and counselling services.

The next section will discuss the questions that seek to find out more about the service experience of the users and their satisfaction level in terms of ease of use and reliability of information. The discourse will progress in connection to the demographics of the users so a convincing explanation can be established.

## 4.2. Quality of youth information and counselling services

This section discusses the questions that ask about the service experience of the respondents. This encompasses ease of access, level of assistance, their preference for receiving information in different areas, and their channels of choice. The discussion will progress in relation to the length and frequency of usage.

### 4.2.1. Length of usage of youth information and counselling services

When the respondents were asked about the length of time they had used youth information and counselling services for, **around 62% of the users had been using them for no longer than three years**. The second largest subgroup were the ones who have been using youth information services for between four to six years. Additionally, 13% of individuals claimed to have used the services for over 10 years.

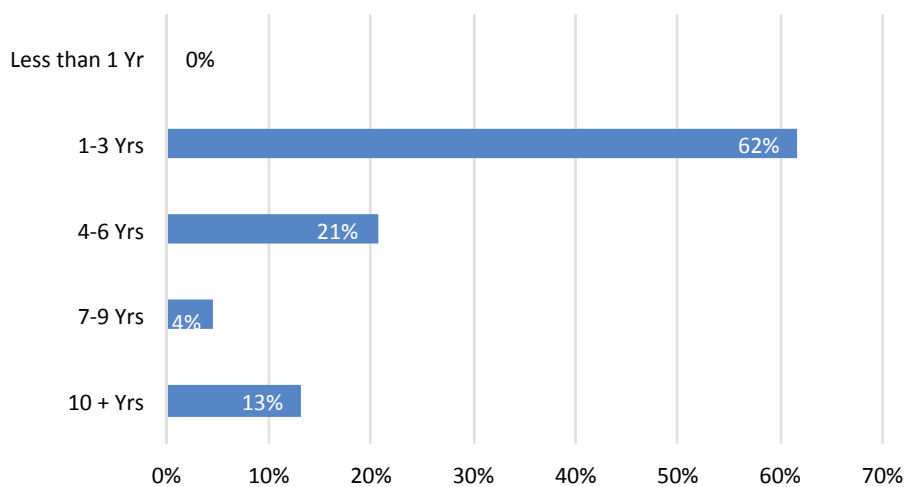


Figure 14: Length of usage of the youth information and counselling services (%)

The trend follows the overall European group, where the majority of the respondents have been using youth information and counselling services for the last three years, or at least used a few times. The usage length is quite similar to the overall European sample.

### 4.2.2. Frequency of usage of youth information and counselling services

While it was only 20% in the European survey sample, the Ukraine sample shows 35% of the respondents have used youth information and counselling services over 20 times. Around 50% of them have used the service between 10 to 20 times.

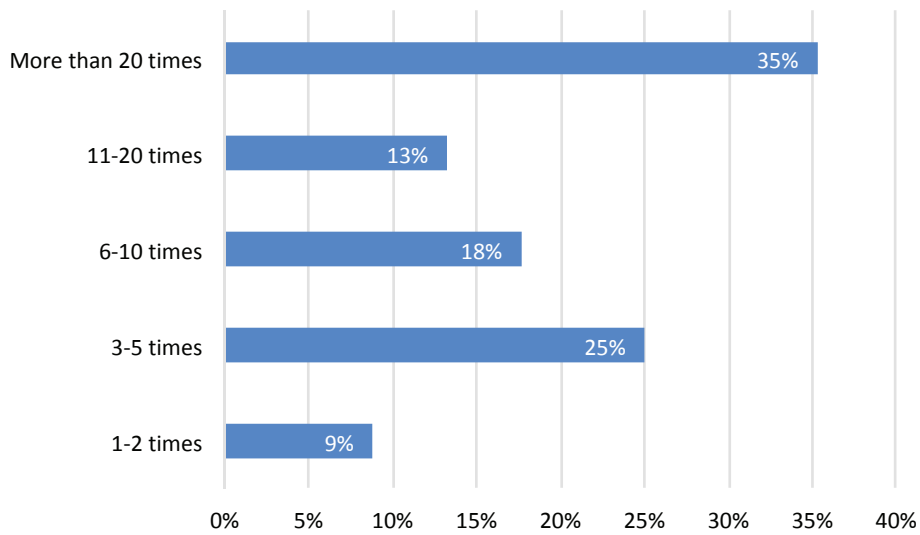


Figure 15: Frequency of usage of the youth information and counselling services (%)

### 4.2.3. Access to information and level of difficulty

The experience of youth information and counselling service users can be evaluated by assessing the ease of access to different areas of information. In the survey, **11 different areas were identified, where information is important to make decisions.** These areas were: **leisure time** (how to spend free time, meet new friends, youth clubs and activities, sports, etc.), **volunteering** (how to take part in a youth project or youth organisation, how to get active in helping others, etc.), education and training (how to choose a school, how to select a course, manage issues in school, etc.), **health and wellbeing** (how to protect your physical and psychological health, health-related advice, etc.), **sexuality and intimate relationships** (relations with boyfriend or girlfriend, knowledge on HIV and sexually transmitted diseases, contraception, etc.), **relationships with family and friends** (how to manage conflicts, solve problems, etc.), **violence** (how to deal with violence or bullying in school or online, in the family or relationship, where to receive help and advice, etc.), **international mobility** (how to take part in international projects, study, volunteer or work abroad, etc.), **employment** (finding work, accessing internship or apprenticeships, summer jobs, etc.), **housing** (how to find housing, how to get a credit for buying a house or apartment etc.), **entrepreneurship** (start-up legal formalities, financing sources, business tax information). In *Figure 16* and *Figure 17* these areas of information were plotted against a 5-points Likert scale with 5 representing the maximum level of ease of access.

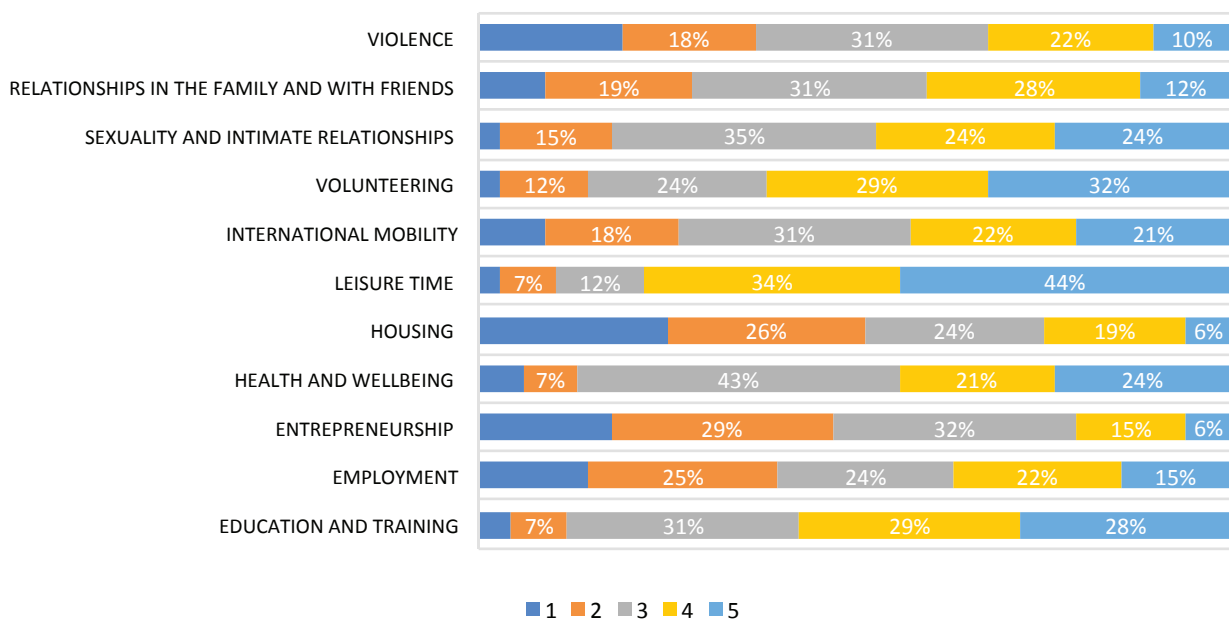


Figure 16: Ease of access to information of users  
5 points Likert scale: 1 very difficult - 5 very easy

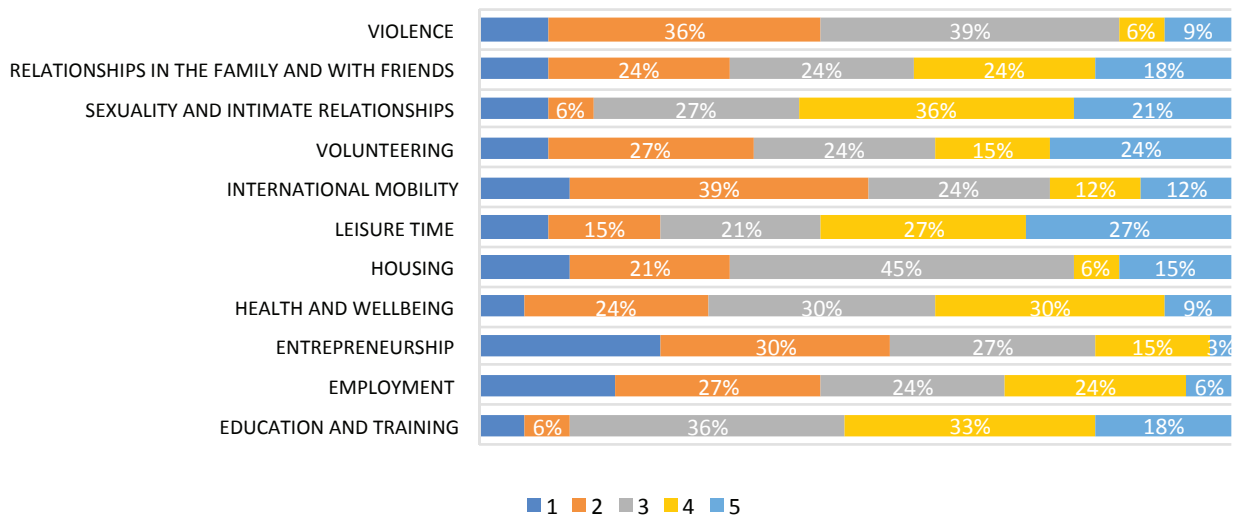


Figure 17: Ease of access to information of non-users  
5 points Likert scale: 1 very difficult - 5 very easy

According to the majority of the users, **housing was the most difficult area to access information about, followed by entrepreneurship, employment, and violence.** This was quite similar to the European sample, but this group also emphasised violence. The majority of the users believe leisure is the easiest area to access information about, followed by volunteering and education. **A large part of the non-users believe accessing information regarding international mobility is difficult.** This area is followed by entrepreneurship and violence. Furthermore, the non-users believe information regarding sexuality is easily available, followed by leisure and education. Users believe accessing information regarding volunteering is easy, in contrast to the non-users.

#### 4.2.4. Assistance of youth information and counselling services

The next question was about how helpful youth information and counselling services are in providing adequate assistance to users in the information areas mentioned above. Maintaining the same parameters and 5-point Likert scale, the participants plotted their perception. From the chart below, it can be suggested that **youth information and counselling services have been considered quite helpful.**

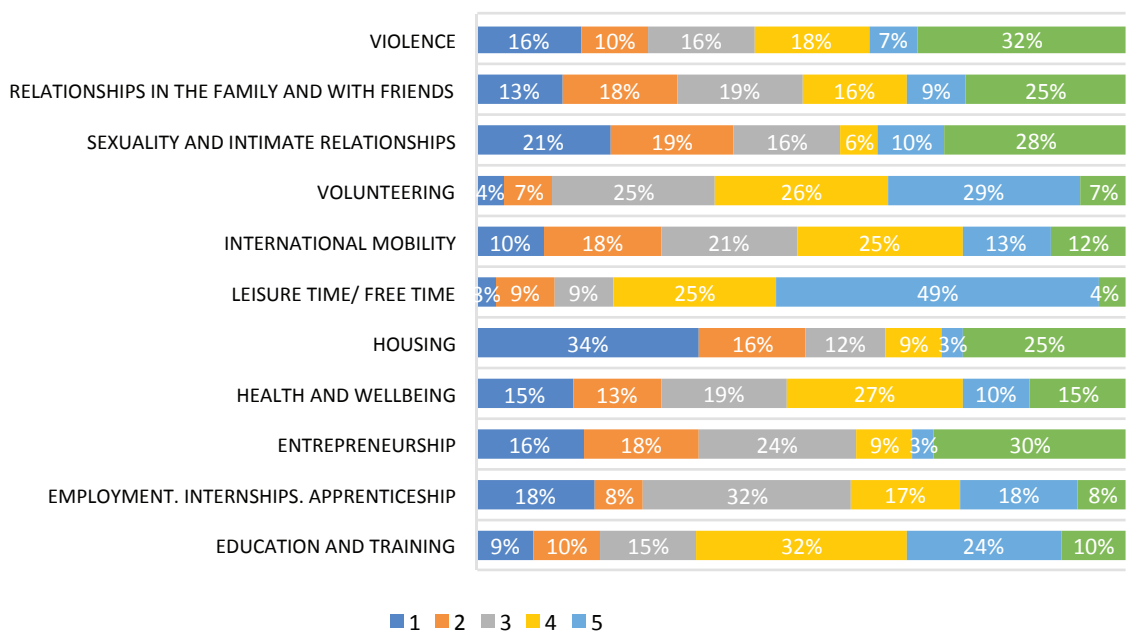


Figure 18: Assistance of youth information and counselling services  
5 points Likert scale: 1 not very helpful - 5 very helpful



**Assistance from youth information services are perceived to be best in the areas of leisure, volunteering, and education,** followed by health, employment and international mobility. Least assistance was perceived in the areas of housing, sexuality and entrepreneurship. While housing is also perceived as the most difficult area to access information in general, it could be important for youth information services to focus more on providing information in relation this topic. Additionally, it must be mentioned that around 30% of the respondents did not have a clear idea about how helpful youth information and counselling services are in the areas of violence, sexuality, housing, and entrepreneurship. It can be argued that this particular age group may not perceive youth information services as the place to turn to for information and counselling in those areas, or may access this support through other channels or services. Some of them may also consider that they do not require information and counselling in these areas. Additionally, specific characteristics of the sample group and/or some cultural aspects may also explain this outcome. As far as violence it is concerned, a more qualitative analysis would also help us find out if there is any link between looking for support in this area and information avoidance in challenging situations, which is also a bit higher than in the overall European sample.

In any case, a more qualitative analysis would be needed in order to draw more conclusive statements on this particular result.

### 4.2.5. Information demand

After studying the perception of the service quality, the study focused on which fields young people perceive as important. Highlighting the information demand of young people will help us understand the areas that have to be enriched with quality information with easy access. The replies of the users displayed a skewed picture, where **75% of the respondents believe employment must be given higher priority, and 50% think education must be given more emphasis.**

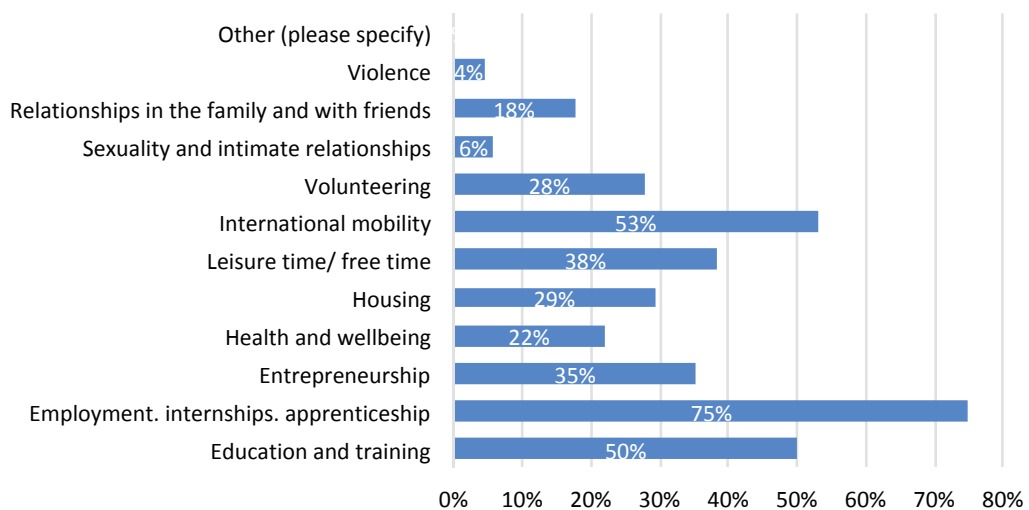


Figure 19: Information demand of users

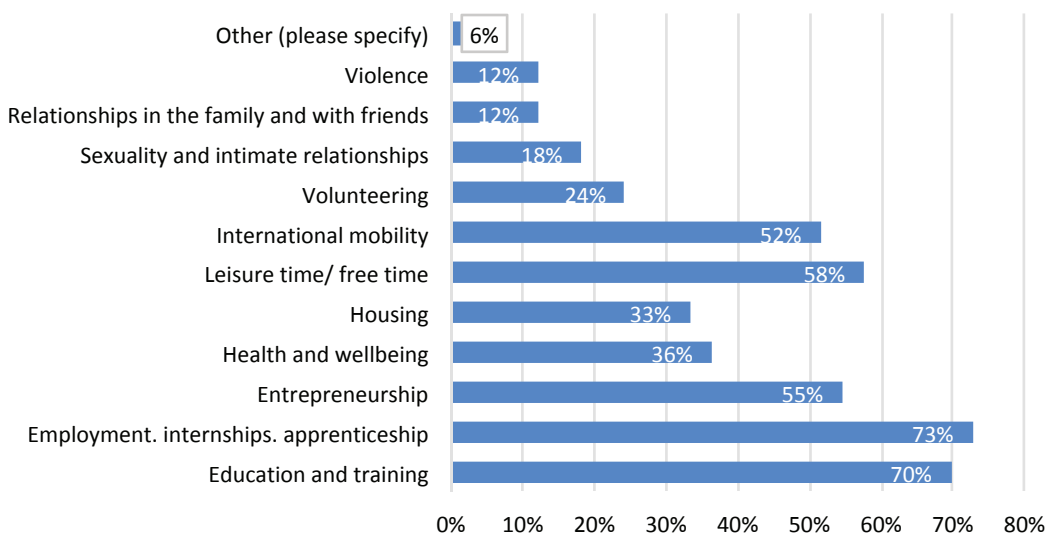


Figure 20: Information demand of non-users

While employment and education were emphasised by the overall European sample, **53% of Ukrainian users think more information regarding international mobility must be available**. Apart from the importance of employment, the preference towards international mobility perhaps indicates the common aspiration and interest to travel and relocate. In terms of demand of information, the non-users showed a similarity with the users. Like the users, they have suggested it is necessary to have more information available in the areas of education and employment. These areas were followed by leisure, entrepreneurship, and international mobility.

#### 4.2.6. Information presentation

Today technology presents multiple channels to source information, and in many different forms, ranging from text to audiovisual. Along with the demand of information, it is imperative to understand the sources that are appropriate for the target group, in order to channel quality information in their desired areas. **The sources presented in the survey were in person – face to face, in person – group work workshops, phone** (hotline, calling an organisation or youth info centre), **Internet** (searching for information for example through Google, newsletter/online magazine, forums, web portals, other), **emails** (reply from hotlines, customer care and information service providers), **Internet social media** (chatting, forums, online communities, Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, Blogs, Viber, Skype, YouTube, other), **printed materials** (booklets, leaflets, etc.), and from media (radio, TV, newspapers, magazines).

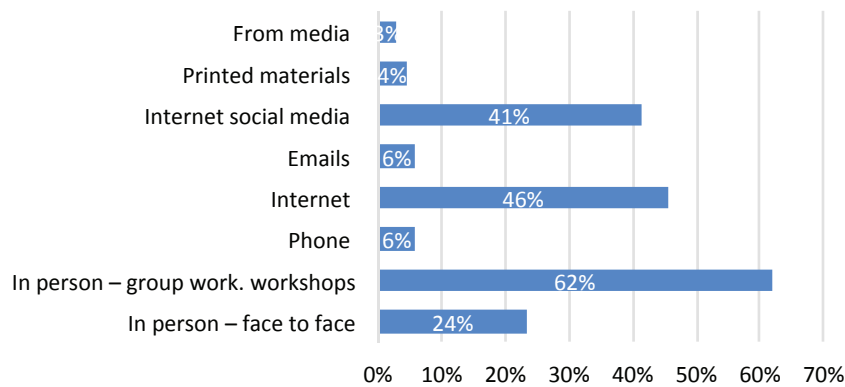


Figure 21: Preferred channels by users to access information

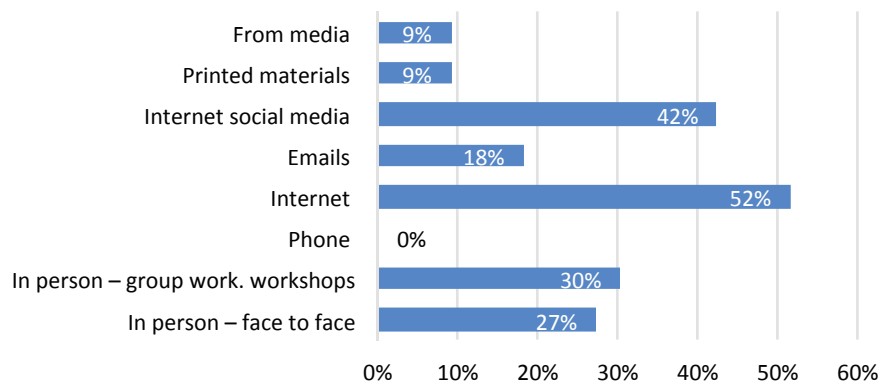


Figure 22: Preferred channels by non-users to access information

This group has shown substantial preference towards in person/workshops. This is very different from the European picture. **While 32% of the European sample group preferred face-to-face**, 61% of the Ukrainian sample chose group work and only 23% chose face-to-face. Among the non-users, over half preferred the Internet and social media. Unlike the users, 30% preferred group work and workshops and another 27% face-to-face information collection.

### 4.3. Information reliability and evaluation

In this section we discuss the **respondents' perception about different sources of information in terms of reliability**, and how they self-evaluate their media and information literacy skills<sup>2</sup>. The discussion is particularly important because it identifies which channels are perceived as more reliable to them, and helps us understand how reliable young people find information. Moreover, it is also necessary to understand the target group we are studying. The later part of this section therefore discusses the information behaviour and media and information literacy of the participants. Media and information literacy occupies an important part of youth information and counselling work, which is why it is a key part of this study.

#### 4.3.1. Reliable sources of information

In this question, the respondents were asked to indicate the sources they believe to be most reliable. The sources they could choose from were **Internet websites, social media, radio and television, peer groups** (family, friends etc.) and **youth information centres**. Maintaining the same areas of information as in previous questions, there was also a choice included as "Don't Know" should the user have no experience in a particular field to identify a reliable source.

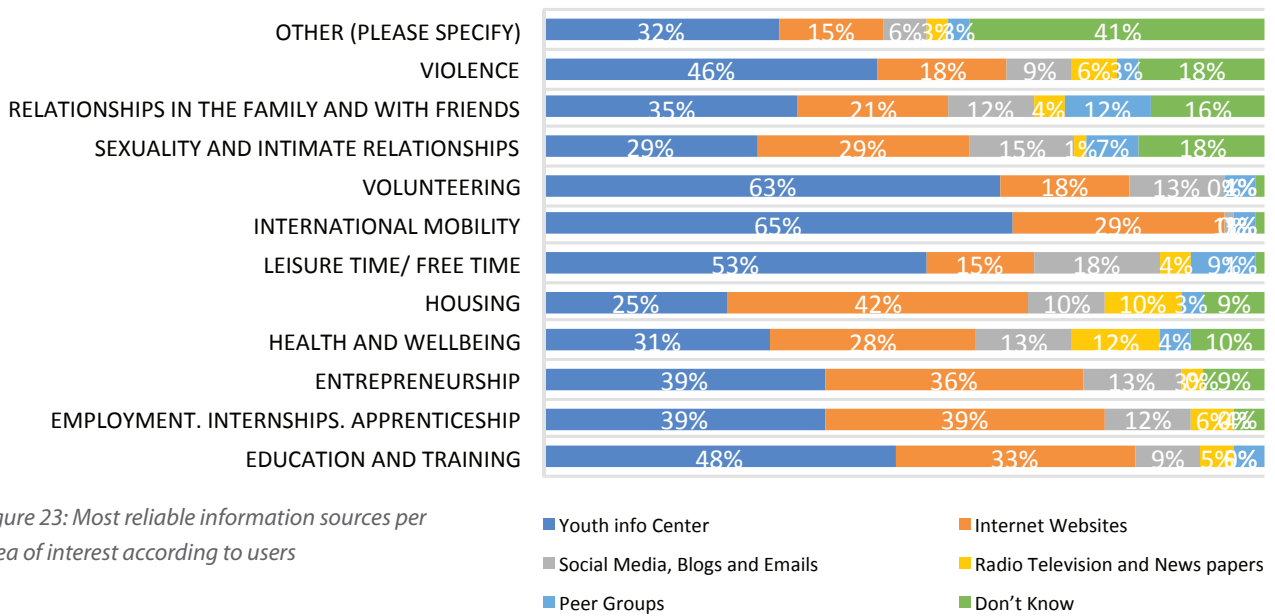


Figure 23: Most reliable information sources per area of interest according to users

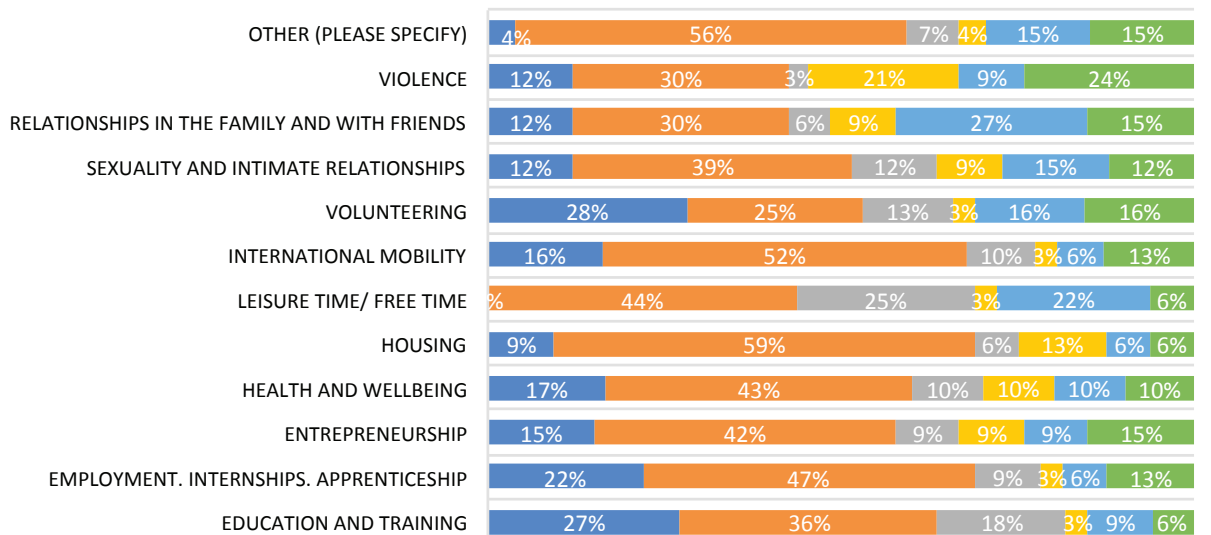


Figure 24: Most reliable information sources per area of interest according to non-users

<sup>2</sup> "Media and Information Literacy recognises the primary role of information and media in our everyday lives. It lies at the core of freedom of expression and information - since it empowers citizens to understand the functions of media and other information providers, to critically evaluate their content, and to make informed decisions as users and producer of information and media content." UNESCO (2017) Media and Information Literacy as Composite Concept.

The overall picture shows that **youth information centres and Internet websites were considered as the most reliable sources of information**. The users clearly preferred youth information centres in the areas of international mobility, violence, and volunteering. These areas were followed by leisure and education. In some areas, Internet websites overtook youth information centres, such as housing. The picture of the non-users in the Ukrainian sample was quite distinct from both the users group and the overall European sample. The non-users, since they have never used youth information and counselling services before, placed a lot of faith on the Internet. Unlike the overall European non-user group, Internet search engines are considered quite useful in collecting information regarding housing, international mobility, and employment. Youth information and counselling services were considered somewhat useful in connection to the volunteering and educational areas by the non-users.

Another interesting observation was that despite its popularity, social media has scored substantially low. **The respondent group do not consider social media as a reliable source of information, and they also do not rely on traditional media**. In intimate areas, peer groups were also considered as reliable.

### 4.3.2. Reliability of information from different sources

After listing the perceived reliable sources of information, the users were asked about the reliability of the information they source from these channels. The objective is to understand whether they perceive that quality information is being transmitted via these popular sources or whether young people doubt the reliability.

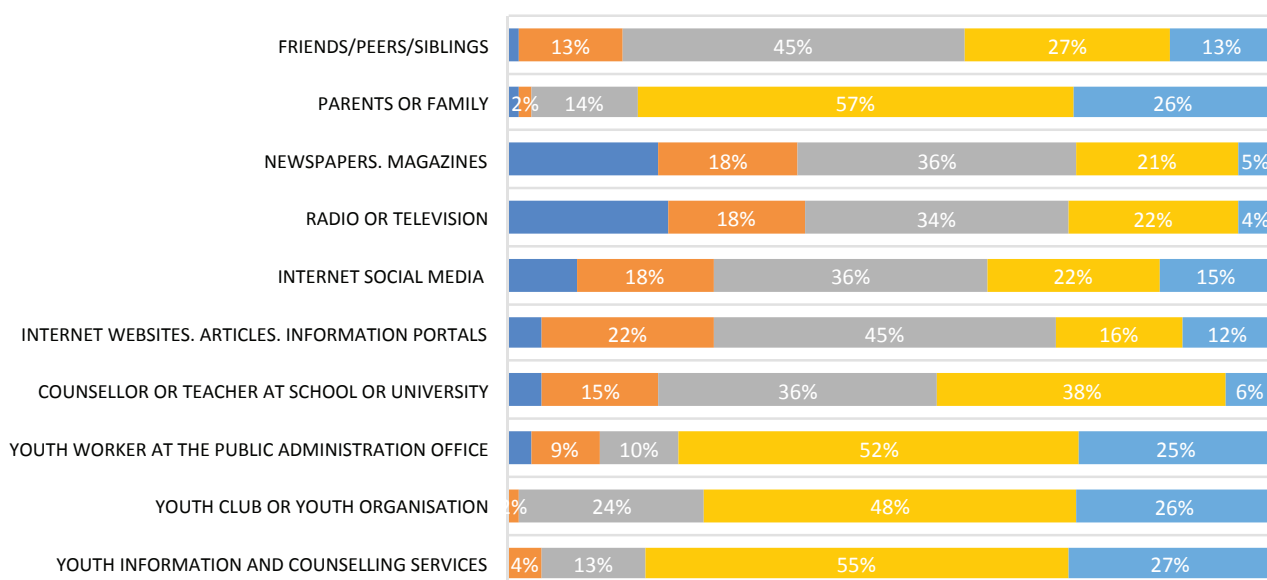


Figure 25: Reliability of information from different sources according to users

5 points Likert scale: 1 less reliable - 5 more reliable

■ 1 ■ 2 ■ 3 ■ 4 ■ 5

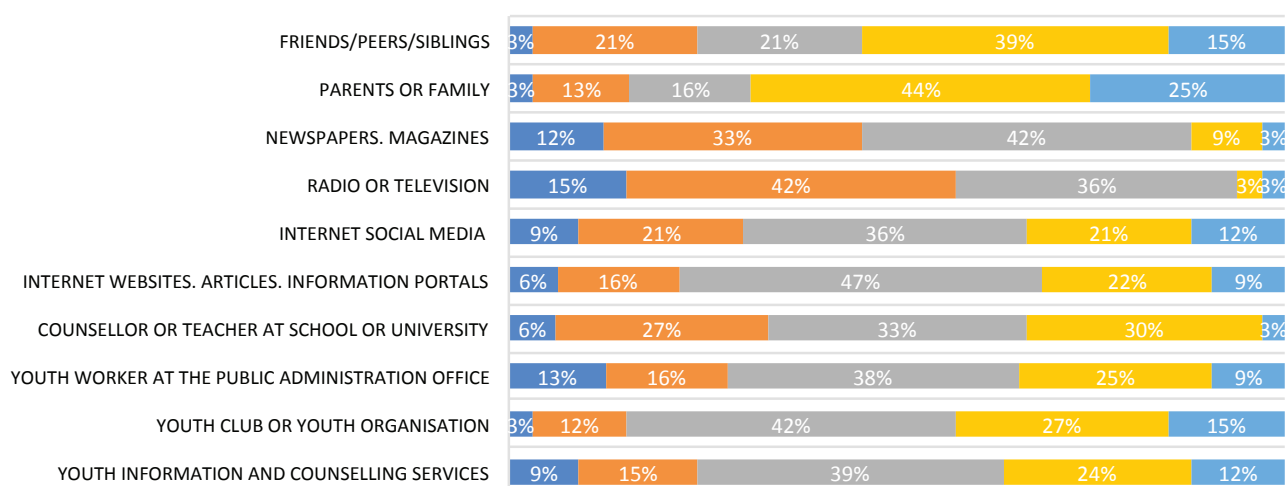


Figure 26: Reliability of information from different sources according to non-users

5 points Likert scale: 1 less reliable - 5 more reliable

The most popular channels do not always provide the most reliable information, this is truer today than ever before. Therefore, it was necessary to find out more about the level of reliability the respondents associate with different information sources. The choices included youth information services, Internet, teachers, media and peer groups. **Unlike the overall European group, the respondents demonstrated great trust in parents and family.** Around 40% of users doubt the reliability of information from traditional mass media. **Almost 30% of the users do not consider Internet and social media reliable sources of information.** Most of the non-users seemed to be unsure about the reliability of information presented on traditional mass media, such as television and newspaper. This is different from the overall European group. While **over 70% of the users rely heavily on information sourced from the youth information services**, over 35% of the non-users have shown that level of conviction in youth information centres.

### 4.3.3. User satisfaction with youth information and counselling services

In the section on information reliability and evaluation, we also asked the users about their overall satisfaction with youth information and counselling services. The question asked about the impact of the service in the users' lives, their level of satisfaction, chances of recommending to peer groups, and finally how they evaluate the information sourced from these facilities. To reply to the question, the respondents were given a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree and strongly agree.

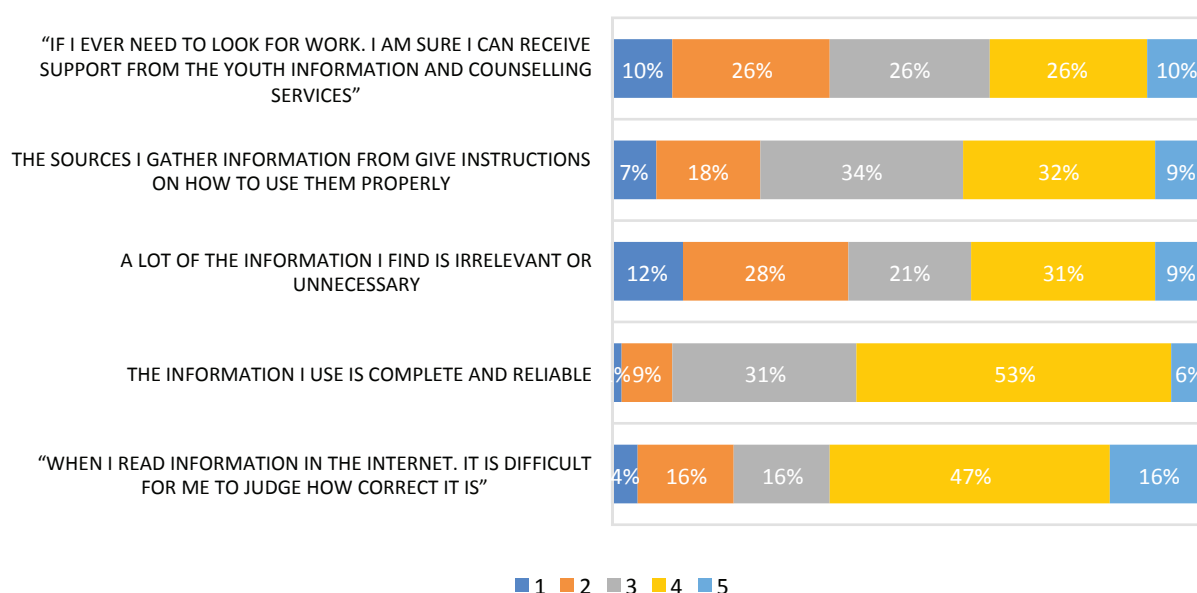


Figure 27: Users satisfaction with youth information services  
5 points Likert scale: 1 strongly disagree – 5 strongly agree

**The users have a high level of satisfaction with youth information and counselling services and feel they get support and guidance in different areas of interest.** From the replies collected, it is clearly visible that the majority of them agreed that the services provided by youth information structures have contributed to changing their life for the better. Over 65% of the users surveyed are satisfied or highly satisfied by the service. Additionally, they have shown adequate trust in the information quality provided by the youth information and counselling services. Almost 50% of the users surveyed consider the information reliable, and 75% of them are likely to recommend the services to their friends. However, compared to the overall European sample where almost half of the respondents believe that youth information services could help them find a job, in Ukraine 36% have this conviction.

### 4.3.4. Media and information literacy

The perceived service quality and satisfaction level largely depend on the service user. Youth information and counselling services also aim to **support young people in gaining autonomy in their own search for information by building up their media and information literacy skills.** Thus, as well as providing information and counselling according to the needs of young people, it is also the mission of youth information services to advise them on how to research and evaluate information in a critical manner.

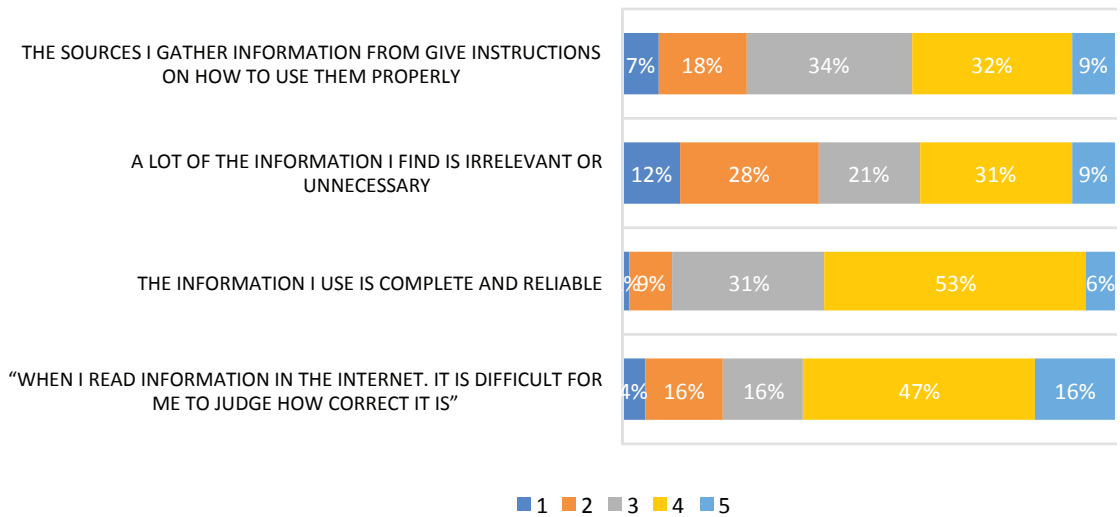


Figure 28: Information evaluation competencies of users  
5 points Likert scale: 1 strongly disagree – 5 strongly agree

A large part of the respondents find it difficult to determine the reliability of information from the Internet. This is in line with the overall European picture, although the Ukrainian sample addresses a slightly higher level of difficulties in judging the reliability of information on the Internet. From the responses of the users, it is clear that a large portion of the survey participants are either sceptical or indifferent about instructions to use sourced information. Around 40% of the user respondents agreed that a lot of the information they source is often irrelevant or useless. However, despite these challenges, the majority of them believe they manage to filter out complete and reliable information. However, this does not mean that they do not face difficulties in validating the information they source from online. Over 60% of the user respondents stated it is difficult for them to judge the reliability of the information collected from the Internet. This indicates that although they believe they have the competencies to source information from different channels and sources, it is challenging for them to sort out the relevant information from the pool of irrelevant information and validate it.

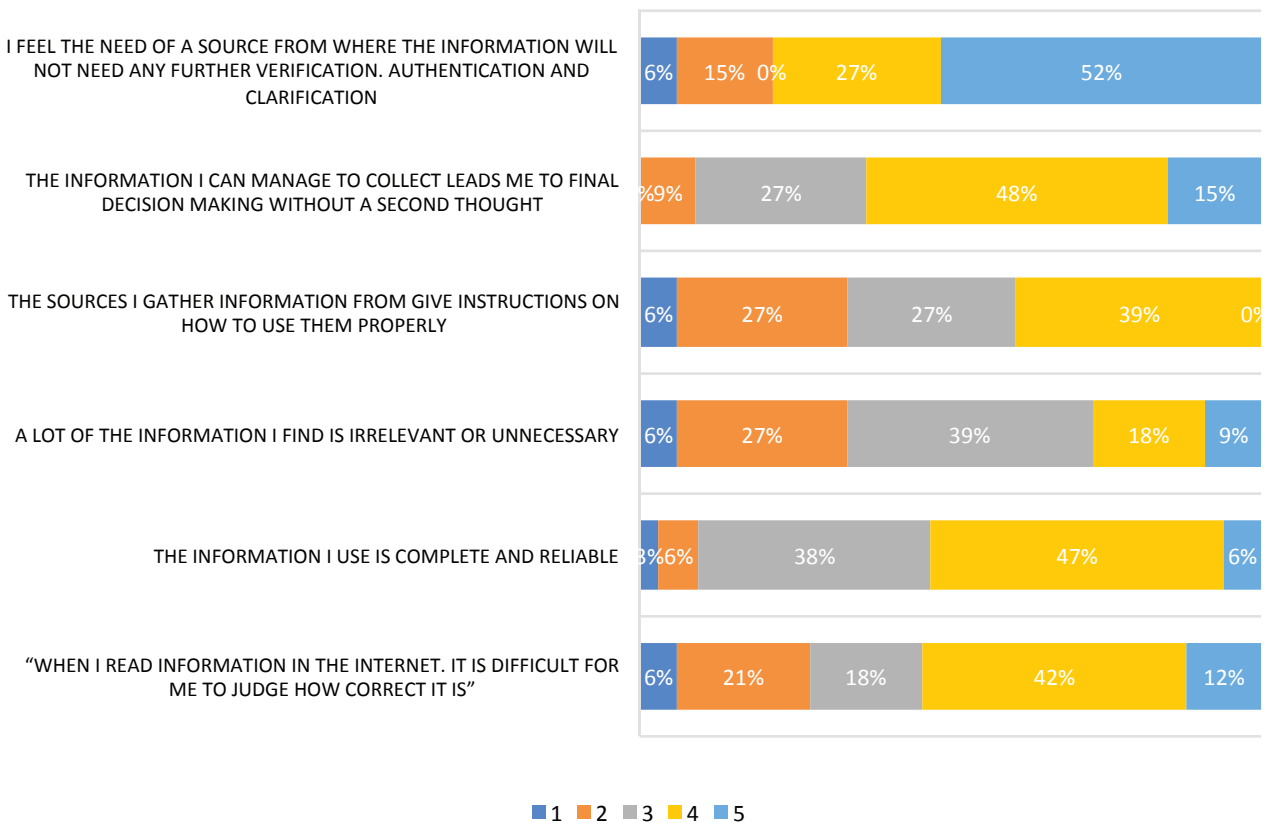


Figure 29: Information evaluation competencies of non-users  
5 points Likert scale: 1 strongly disagree – 5 strongly agree

The non-users had a longer set of statements in this question, while the statements on service satisfaction were not relevant. **Almost 80% of the non-users believe that a service is necessary where reliable information is available, and sources do not need to be further verified.** Additionally, 54% of non-users find it difficult to validate information obtained from the Internet. The picture here is also similar to the European study, although the Ukrainian sample shows higher levels of difficulty in judging reliability (53% in Ukraine compared to 41% in the European sample) and a stronger need of a service where information can be obtained without worrying about its reliability (79% in Ukraine compared to 55% in the European sample). Yet, the sample in Ukraine seems to be significantly more self-confident in judging information and information sources. In fact, 63% of non-users in Ukraine replied that they make final decisions based on the information that they collect without further hesitation, compared to 40% in the European sample of non-users. Moreover, 27% of the Ukrainian non-users compared to 44% in the European non-users consider that a lot of information they find is irrelevant or unnecessary.

Figure 30 and Figure 31 aim to understand how users and non-users evaluate and perceive their level of media and information literacy. Both groups replied using the same 5 point Likert scale as in the previous chart.

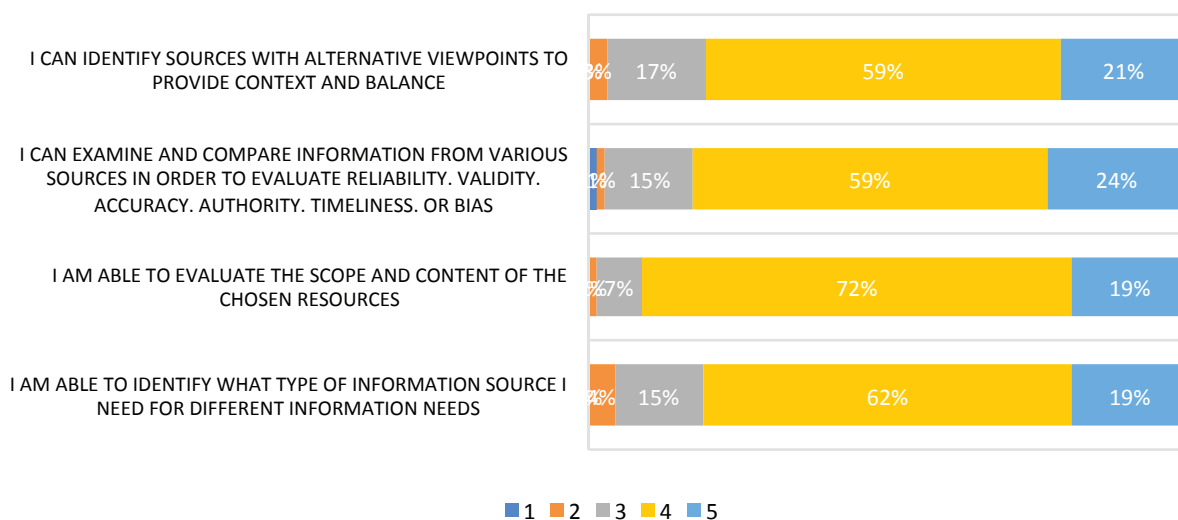


Figure 30: Media and information literacy of users  
5 points Likert scale: 1 strongly disagree – 5 strongly agree

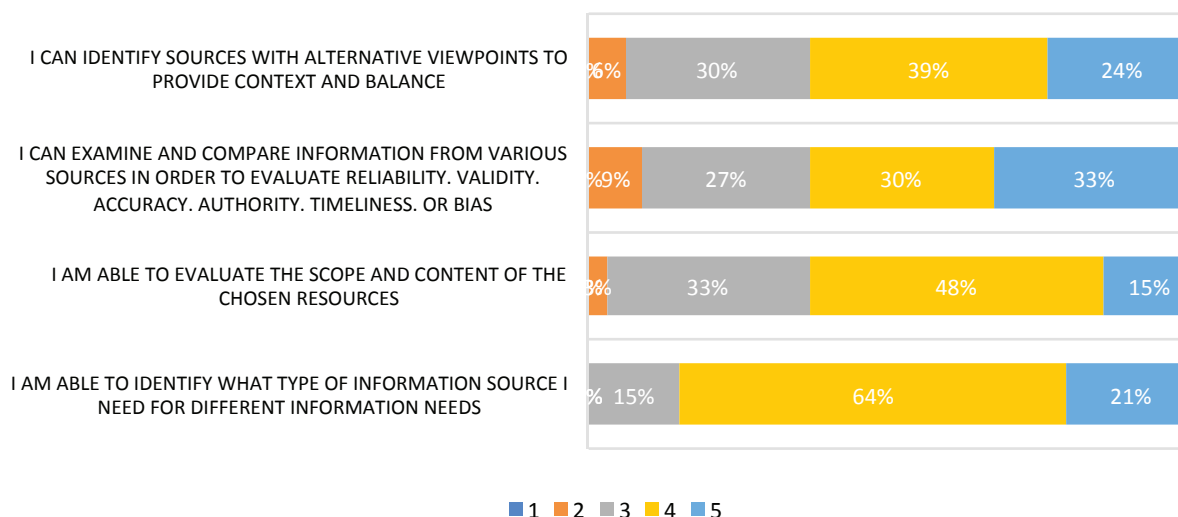


Figure 31: Media and information literacy of non-users  
5 points Likert scale: 1 strongly disagree – 5 strongly agree

From the data, it is clear that the respondents perceive they have a very good ability to examine, compare, and validate information from different sources. **Approximately 80% of the users and over 60% of the non-users are confident in their media and information literacy skills.** This is similar to the European data, where over 70% of the users and over 60% of the non-users stated they are competent in identifying and comparing sources to extract, evaluate, and validate information. This is interesting as over

half of the respondents stated earlier that it is difficult to judge the reliability of information on the Internet and that they require a source where information is reliable does not require further verification (Figures 28 and 29).

### 4.3.5. Influence of challenging information

Apart from information overload and lack of media and information literacy, information anxiety contributes heavily in shaping information behaviour. These sorts of anxiety could result in information avoidance and difficulties in sharing problems. In this question, we asked the respondents about their information behaviour when exposed to challenging and uncomfortable information. To reply to the question, the respondents were given a 5-point Likert scale from strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree and strongly agree. This question is likely to indicate how tolerant the young generation is towards information that is challenging and how they react to this kind of information.

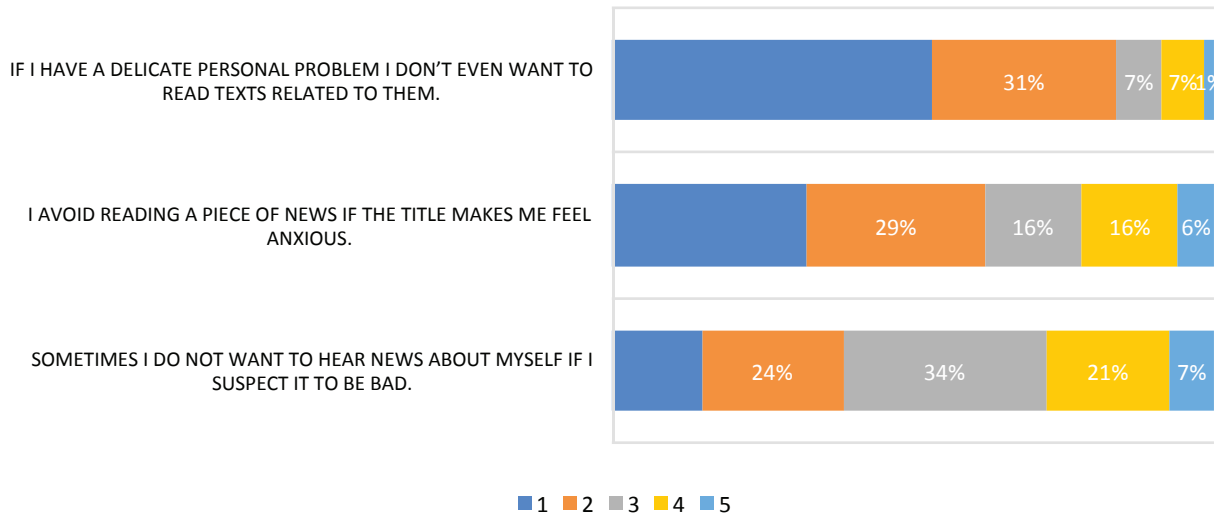


Figure 32: Influence on users of challenging information  
5 points Likert scale: 1 strongly disagree – 5 strongly agree

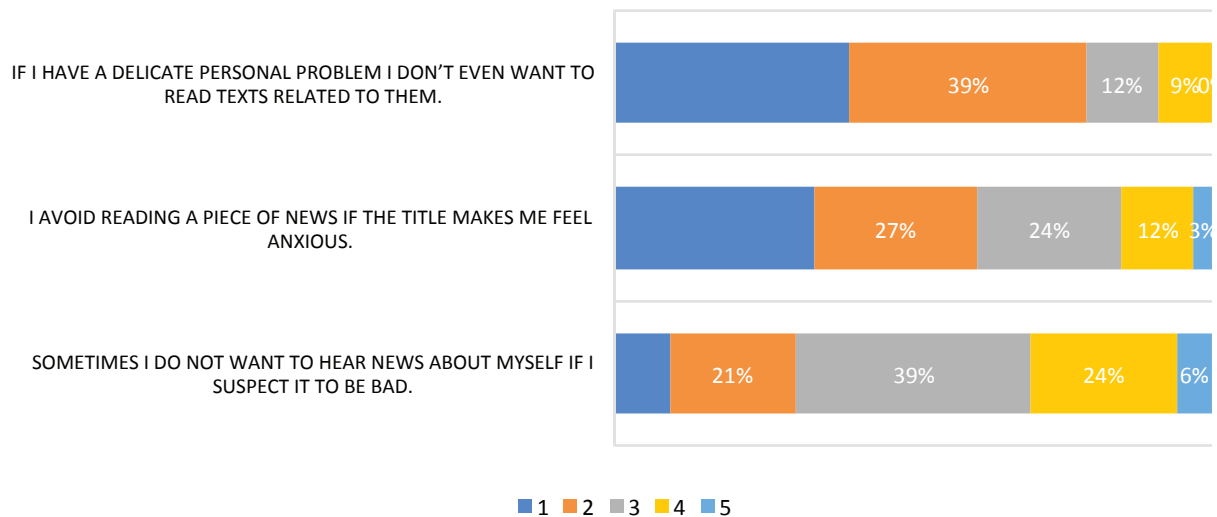


Figure 33: Influence on non-users of challenging information  
5 points Likert scale: 1 strongly disagree – 5 strongly agree

Like the European group, the users were quite confident about handling information in difficult situations. However, **28% of the users and 30% of the non-users have a tendency to avoid possibly negative information that concerns them**, and another 22% of the users avoid information causing anxiety. This is similar to the European sample. This indicates a substantial number of young people have a tendency to avoid information when it has a possibility to be negative.



The interesting part of these questions is the group avoiding information, and that can be interpreted as a part of a young person's strategy to information mastering in a complex information landscape.<sup>3</sup> It has been shown that a person might hide his or her information needs, although they are aware of the usefulness of the information for his/her well-being and comfort. However, the shame and stigma might work as hindrances to the information (Buchanan & Tuckerman 2016; Lingel & Boyd 2013). This is a complex matter and needs further research to understand the phenomenon in more detail.

#### 4.4. Summary

In this section, we have summarised the discussions above. The comparison allows us to make a side-by-side comparison between the users and the non-users.

	Users	Non-users
<b>Demographics</b>		
Age	70% between 19 to 29	70% between 19 to 29
Gender	21% Male 78% Female	52% Male 48% Female
Current residence	56% in large cities	55% in large cities
Educational attainment	90% have Higher education	90% have Higher education
Current status	53% Working, 25% working and studying	64% Working, 12% working and studying
<b>Quality of youth information and counselling services</b>		
Length of usage of youth information and counselling services	1 to 6 years	NA
Frequency of usage of youth information and counselling services	3 to 10 times by 43%, more than 20 times by 35%	NA
Access to information and level of difficulty	Difficult: entrepreneurship, employment, and violence Easy: leisure time, volunteering, and education	Difficult: entrepreneurship, international mobility, and violence Easy: sexuality, leisure time, education
Assistance of youth information and counselling services	Least helpful: housing, sexuality, and entrepreneurship Most helpful: leisure time, education, and volunteering	NA
Information demand	Employment, international mobility, and education	Employment, education, leisure time, and international mobility
Information presentation	Face-to-face-group work, Internet, and social media	Face-to-face-group work, Internet, social media,
<b>Information reliability and evaluation</b>		
Reliable sources of information	Primarily youth information centres, Internet websites for housing, employment and sexuality	Primarily Internet websites, youth information centres for volunteering, peer groups for relationships, and leisure time
Reliability of information from different sources	Most reliable: youth information centres, youth workers, and parents or family Least reliable: radio or television, newspaper, and social media	Most reliable: parents or family, friends and peers Least reliable: radio or television, newspaper, counsellor or teacher, and social media
User satisfaction with youth information and counselling services	Majority are satisfied, the service improved lives, and would recommend to friends. 40% respondents suffer from information overload.	80% require reliable sources of information. Over 30% would appreciate instructions on how to use the information sourced.
Media and information literacy	Majority are confident in sourcing, evaluating, and validating information	Majority are confident in sourcing, evaluating, and validating information
Influence of challenging information	28% avoid information when they think it could have a negative impact on them	30% avoid information when they think it could have a negative impact on them

Table 1: Summary of result

<sup>3</sup> Information avoidance defined in Sairanen, A. & Savolainen, R. (2010). Avoiding health information in the context of uncertainty management. *Information Research*, 15(4), 8; Poirier, L. & Robinson, L. Informational balance: slow principles in the theory and practice of information behaviour. *Journal of Documentation*, 70(4), 687-707.

To sum up the results, **the urban youth of Ukraine find information regarding employment, housing, entrepreneurship, and international mobility difficult to access**, and demand more information in these areas. They want the information available online, and also in workshops and in face-to-face consultations. The respondents demonstrated their dependency on the Internet, but also admitted facing difficulties in validating information sourced from the Internet and social media. Some of the respondents also experience information overload and are prone to avoiding sensitive information. Given the current trends among urban employed young adults of Ukraine, it seems youth information and counselling services have a lot to offer. **A stronger awareness and expansion of these services will empower more young people in making better decisions** and reduce the risk of them not making the most of the opportunities available to them. The provision of services to younger users should be also part of the strategy considering the added value experienced by other age groups according to the European survey results

## 5. Conclusions and recommendations

The results of the survey provide an encouraging picture for youth information and counselling services. Seemingly, urban, educated and working young adults of Ukraine are well aware of the service and have used it multiple times.

The survey revealed that the users are quite satisfied with the services provided. The information provided by youth information and counselling services has largely helped young people make effective decisions and improved their lives. Moreover, youth information services have a positive image and the users are likely to recommend the service among their peers.

On the other hand, the outreach to younger age groups is more limited in comparison with the overall European sample. **Youth information and counselling services must be extended to all parts of society, namely to younger age groups (between 12 and 18 years old) and to smaller towns and rural areas.** The non-user group displayed more dependency on online sources, such as online search engines and social media, although the sample is mainly related to an urban population with easy access to the Internet. The majority of young respondents would like to have access to reliable sources of information, where further validation is not necessary. Young people in Ukraine were quite antagonistic about the reliability of the information in the traditional mass media, such as radio, television, and newspapers. **Despite the wide spread popularity of the Internet, young people often find it difficult to verify the reliability of the information.** Such confusion and dilemma may have long-term implications, and can have a major impact on society as a whole, especially relating to access to rights, fake news, disinformation, and new forms of propaganda.

Despite the mistrust in the information coming from the Internet, it is still the most popular channel for the majority of the urban young people in Ukraine between 19 and 29 years old, as showed in the survey. Therefore, **enhancing online presence is imperative for youth information and counselling services.** Proper Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) could be initiated to increase traffic in the websites. Intelligent information architecture must be ensured to make it user-friendly and easy to access. Social media can also be a strong platform to generate awareness of youth information and counselling services among the target group. Additional to those, it is also necessary that the services strive to create a sustainable awareness so young people in Ukraine, including younger age groups (under 19 years old), can grow up with better competences in sourcing reliable information. Compared to the overall European sample, young people surveyed in Ukraine showed more interest in group work when it comes to face-to-face information; such workshops could be arranged in youth work settings or in collaboration with schools and universities. For instance, workshops could be organised by youth information workers at primary and secondary schools and/or at youth centres to create awareness of the service and different key topics.

Youth information and counselling services have to be diversified in order to increase their effectiveness and outreach. More materials and resources containing information about housing, sexuality, violence, international mobility and entrepreneurship

should be created. **Having the same information available through multiple channels is necessary to ensure all young people in the country have access to reliable information no matter where they reside.** It was observed that the urban youth in Ukraine demand more information about entrepreneurship, which indicates a growing interest in the creation of new businesses. Providing them with reliable and accurate information and face-to-face guidance in cooperation with relevant partners is also in the very best interest of the economy. At the same time, to ensure well-being, providing adequate information in the area of leisure activities and international mobility opportunities, as well as access to face-to-face counselling (through group work or individually) about violence and personal relations.

**Housing seems to be a major concern in urban areas of Ukraine; information about finding accommodation and access to housing is therefore quite relevant.** Social media can be an appropriate platform for circulating information about housing and other important topics in Ukrainian urban areas. **Workshops and face-to-face counselling could be a large untapped section for the services, particularly in the area of employment and international mobility.** Youth information and counselling services must be a first stop for young people interested in international mobility opportunities against often misleading unregulated consultancy agencies sending young people abroad. Students and professionals interested in going to study or work outside Ukraine must have access to reliable and comprehensive information and guidance. Regarding information in the area of employment; programmes could be designed that collect and consolidate information about job openings and simplifies them. **Collaboration with relevant services and online providers of information on employment** could be effective in supporting more users and improving the experience of those who already use the service.

In terms of media and information literacy, it was observed that the non-users were more dependent on information from the Internet and social media, yet found it difficult to validate the information, and were often overloaded with unnecessary information. Therefore, **youth information and counselling services must study further how the information they provide is effective and how the specific channels used reach out to the target group.** For instance, young people perceive youth information services as reliable sources of information, but can be of limited help in the event of unemployment. Instead, youth information services of Ukraine could be the link between employers and potential employees. Online application possibilities through youth information services' websites and the organisation of workshops on how to draft a good CV or successfully pass a job interview could be introduced. For areas of information such as health, sexuality, violence and relationships, presenting accurate and objective information (online and offline) is essential to help prevent wrong decisions, misconceptions and unintended risks. Moreover, a part of the respondents from both groups showed a tendency to avoid information, particularly relating to sensitive topics. Guiding and informing young people through workshops, as well as through online channels, could help them to be more equipped to fight disinformation rather than avoiding necessary information.

Another important aspect of service design improvement is to pay attention to the service providers. More than ever, **youth information workers need sufficient training and resources to cope with the fast and fluid landscape of information today.** The format and means of providing information and counselling is constantly changing. Youth information workers in Ukraine must develop themselves according to their social, cultural, and technological environment. They must study the information behaviour and trends of the target group in connection to their context, which shape and form the information practices of a generation. Youth policies and youth work must be developed and implemented upon the foundations of studies on the information behaviour and the information use of the young people.

In this concluding section, interpretation of the trends, plausible explanations, and appropriate recommendations were suggested. The recommendations have been proposed in connection to the choices the majority of the participants displayed. However, it is important to remember that the sample size was only 101 respondents, thus not giving a representative picture of young people in Ukraine. Nevertheless, it is an important first step towards learning to know better the target group of youth information services and counselling. Although this study can help us compare some interesting patterns and trends among users and non-users of youth information and counselling services in Ukraine, **a more in-depth analysis using also qualitative methods and a wider sample would be needed in order to better understand the service gaps**, and what youth information and counselling services should look like.





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