

# SMART AI, SMARTER YOUTH

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## Report on AI Awareness, Usage, and Training Needs in Youth Work



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## 1. Introduction

This report consolidates findings from four national surveys conducted in Lithuania, Slovakia, Türkiye, and Portugal, as part of the *Smart AI, Smarter Youth* project. The purpose is to assess:

- Awareness and understanding of artificial intelligence (AI)
- Current use of AI tools in youth work
- Perceived opportunities and risks
- Training needs and organizational readiness

A total of **272 respondents** participated across the four countries (Lithuania: 50, Slovakia: 61, Türkiye: 116, Portugal: 45), offering a diverse and representative view of youth work professionals in different institutional and cultural contexts.

What emerges is not a simple picture of adoption, but a more nuanced reality. AI is already present in everyday work used for writing, communication, planning, and learning but its integration is still uneven. In some contexts, such as Slovakia, AI is part of daily routines, while in others, like Portugal, a significant group (31%) has not yet used AI at all.

At the same time, respondents do not view AI uncritically. In Lithuania, for example, some participants pointed out that AI is helpful for routine administrative tasks but “struggles when deeper thinking is required.” In Portugal, similar concerns appear around the risk of losing authenticity in youth work. This tension between usefulness and limitation runs through all four reports and shapes how AI is being adopted in practice.

## 2. Methodological Overview

All four national reports followed a similar survey structure, allowing for meaningful comparison. The questionnaire covered:

- Demographics and professional roles
- AI knowledge and usage frequency
- Attitudes toward AI in youth engagement and inclusion
- Perceived barriers and ethical concerns
- Training needs and preferred formats
- Organizational readiness and strategy

While the surveys were implemented independently, the consistency in themes allows for a reliable comparative analysis. Lithuania and Slovakia provide more detailed quantitative breakdowns (percentages across most categories), while Portugal contributes more qualitative reflections, and Türkiye combines both structured data and contextual interpretation.



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An important observation across the datasets is that **self-assessment plays a central role**. Respondents rated their own AI knowledge and confidence, which reveals not only their actual usage but also how comfortable they feel engaging with AI in a professional context. In Lithuania, for instance, although 60% identify as intermediate users, only a smaller portion feel highly confident explaining AI concepts, highlighting a gap between use and understanding.

### 3. Participant Profile and Context

#### 3.1 Roles in Youth Work

Across countries, respondents include:

- Youth workers (49.2% in Slovakia; 37.1% in Türkiye)
- Educators/trainers (dominant in Lithuania at 54%)
- Program coordinators (notably high in Portugal at 40%)

This distribution shows that AI is being explored across both operational and strategic levels of youth work. In Lithuania, the strong presence of educators suggests a focus on AI in learning environments, while in Portugal, the higher proportion of coordinators indicates interest at the level of project management and organizational development.

#### 3.2 Professional Experience

Clear differences appear:

- Portugal: highly experienced workforce (75% with 5+ years)
- Lithuania: relatively experienced (44% with 5+ years)
- Slovakia: early-career heavy (over 60% with less than 3 years)
- Türkiye: very early-stage workforce (45.7% with less than 1 year)

These differences shape how AI is approached. More experienced professionals (Portugal, Lithuania) tend to raise questions about ethics, long-term impact, and responsible use. In contrast, less experienced respondents (Türkiye, Slovakia) are often more active users of AI tools, but also more likely to report uncertainty, especially in explaining or evaluating AI outputs.

#### 3.3 Organizational Context

- Portugal: NGOs dominate (80%)
- Lithuania: strong government presence (48%)
- Türkiye: mixed but government-influenced (34.5%)
- Slovakia: balanced distribution across NGO, government, and community

This variation influences both access and attitudes. In Portugal, NGO flexibility allows experimentation but often without structured support. In Lithuania, institutional settings provide



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more stability but may slow down innovation. Across all countries, however, a common issue appears: **organizational structures have not yet fully adapted to AI integration.**

## 4. AI Knowledge and Competence

### 4.1 Levels of Knowledge

- Slovakia: **55.7% advanced users**
- Türkiye: 41.4% advanced, 39.7% intermediate
- Lithuania: 60% intermediate, only 8% advanced
- Portugal: 49% intermediate, 31% beginner

This clearly reflects **three different maturity levels**:

- Slovakia → highly advanced and confident
- Türkiye → rapidly developing but uneven
- Lithuania & Portugal → stable but still building depth

These differences are significant. In Slovakia, the high percentage of advanced users aligns with high daily usage rates. In contrast, Lithuania shows widespread familiarity but limited depth, while Portugal reflects a mixed landscape where many are still at an early stage.

### 4.2 Confidence in Explaining AI

A particularly revealing finding:

- Slovakia: average **3.8 / 5**
- Türkiye: **3.13 / 5**
- Portugal: **3.4 / 5**
- Lithuania: majority clustered around mid-level (3–4)

Even in contexts with high usage, confidence in explaining AI remains moderate. This suggests that AI is being used as a tool, but not yet fully understood as a concept. This gap is especially important in youth work, where professionals are expected not only to use tools, but to guide and educate others. AI is being used practically, but not yet fully integrated into professional knowledge. For youth workers, this creates a limitation not in using tools, but in **supporting young people to understand and critically engage with them.**

## 5. AI Usage Patterns

### 5.1 Frequency of Use

- Slovakia: 52.5% daily use
- Lithuania: 32% daily, 38% weekly

- Türkiye: 43.1% occasional use (dominant)
- Portugal: 31% never use AI

This reveals a clear divide:

- **High integration** → Slovakia
- **Regular but not dominant** → Lithuania
- **Exploratory use** → Türkiye
- **Partial adoption / resistance** → Portugal

This shows a strong contrast. In Slovakia, AI is already embedded in daily routines. In Türkiye, it is still used more situationally. In Portugal, a significant portion remains outside AI use entirely, despite high interest in training.

## 5.2 Most Common Tools

Across all countries:

- ChatGPT, Google Gemini, DeepSeek (chatbots)
- Canva, Grammarly (content creation)

Less frequently used:

- Data analysis tools (e.g., Tableau: only ~5% in Lithuania)
- Advanced AI platforms

This shows that AI adoption is currently surface-level and tool-based, rather than deeply technical. This shows a strong contrast. In Slovakia, AI is already embedded in daily routines. In Türkiye, it is still used more situationally. In Portugal, a significant portion remains outside AI use entirely, despite high interest in training.

## 5.3 Current Applications

Examples from the data:

- Lithuania: educational support (36.3%) and administrative use (20.9%)
- Slovakia: communication (36%) and education (29%)
- Türkiye: balanced use across communication (26.3%) and education (25.9%)
- Portugal: administrative automation highest (44%)

AI is primarily used to support efficiency and communication, rather than transformation of practice. A pattern becomes clear: AI is primarily used to **support existing work**, not transform it. It helps save time, generate materials, and manage communication, but is rarely used for deeper analysis or innovation.



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## 6. Perceived Value of AI

### 6.1 Youth Engagement and Inclusion

Strong agreement across countries:

- Türkiye: 83.6% positive
- Lithuania: 59% agree/strongly agree combined
- Slovakia: majority strongly agree (35 out of 61 respondents)
- Portugal: over 75% positive

AI is especially valued for:

- Language translation (up to 29.4% in Türkiye, 27.1% in Lithuania)
- Personalized learning (up to 32.5% in Türkiye)
- Accessibility tools (~20–25% across countries)

This confirms that AI is seen not only as efficient, but as inclusive and enabling.

### 6.2 Perceived Potential

Across all countries:

- Administrative support (~23–36%)
- Personalized learning (~26–40%)
- Youth engagement (~32–33%)

These are remarkably consistent, suggesting a shared understanding of AI's role across different contexts.

## 7. Barriers to AI Adoption

### 7.1 Structural Barriers

Most consistent barrier:

- Lack of training:
  - Lithuania: 38%
  - Slovakia: 34.8%
  - Türkiye: top barrier
  - Portugal: dominant qualitative theme

Other barriers:

- Budget constraints (notably Türkiye & Lithuania)



- Lack of resources (27.5% in Slovakia)

## 7.2 Cultural and Organizational Barriers

- Resistance to technology (Türkiye)
- Lack of strategy (Portugal: <30% have AI strategies)
- Uncertainty about meaningful use (Lithuania qualitative feedback)

## 7.3 Ethical Barriers

Top concerns across countries:

- Data privacy (31.3% in Lithuania, 33.3% in Türkiye)
- Bias and fairness
- Over-reliance (28.5% Lithuania)

Additional nuance:

- Türkiye: job replacement (25.3%)
- Portugal: loss of human connection

## 8. Training Needs and Learning Preferences

### 8.1 Demand for Training

- Lithuania: 82% interested
- Slovakia: 4.88/5 importance
- Türkiye: 75% say training is necessary
- Portugal: 89% willing

This is one of the strongest cross-country consistencies.

### 8.2 Priority Topics

Across all countries:

- Practical applications (top priority everywhere)
- AI ethics (high demand across all reports)
- Basic AI knowledge

Lithuania provides numeric breakdown:

- Ethics: 29.3%
- Practical use: 28.5%



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### 8.3 Preferred Formats

- In-person workshops: strongest in Slovakia (42.3%) and Türkiye (44%)
- Online formats: Lithuania (38% synchronous)
- Blended learning: Portugal preference

Mentoring is least preferred across all countries.

### 9. Organizational Readiness

- Lithuania: 54% no support
- Portugal: only 24% support
- Slovakia: 34/61 supported
- Türkiye: 39.7% have strategy, 39.7% unsure

This confirms a structural gap: AI adoption is driven by individuals, while organizations remain uncertain or underprepared.

### 10. AI and Human Roles

Across all countries:

- Lithuania: 90% want human oversight
- Türkiye: 89.7% say AI should remain supportive
- Slovakia & Portugal: strong qualitative emphasis on human interaction

There is a clear shared principle: AI is a tool, not a replacement for human relationships in youth work.

### 11. Cross-Country Synthesis

1. AI adoption is uneven but progressing
2. Training is the most critical missing element
3. Ethical awareness is strong and consistent
4. Organizational support is insufficient
5. AI is strongly linked to inclusion and accessibility

### 12. Conclusion

This combined analysis reveals a field that is actively engaging with AI, but not yet structurally prepared to fully integrate it. Youth workers across all four countries are already using AI tools in practical ways writing, planning, communicating, and supporting learning. They see clear benefits, particularly in efficiency and inclusion. At the same time, they remain cautious, especially regarding ethical risks, over-reliance, and the limits of AI in relational work. The



strongest and most consistent message across all reports is the need for training that is both practical and responsible. Without it, AI risks remaining a useful but shallow tool. With it, there is potential for deeper, more meaningful integration. The next phase is therefore not about introducing AI, but about helping youth workers use it with confidence, clarity, and purpose.

