

Report

Certification for facilitators and validators

Project title:	Professional training for easy-to-read facilitators and validators
Project acronym:	TRAIN2VALIDATE
Grant Agreement:	2020-1-ES01-KA203-082068
Funding Scheme:	Erasmus +, KA2
KA203:	Strategic Partnerships (Higher Education)
Project Duration:	01/09/2020-31/08/2023 (36 months)
Project Coordinator:	Plena Inclusión Madrid, Spain (PIM)
Partners:	ECQA GMBH, Austria Scuola Superiore Per Mediatori Linguistici, Italy (SSML) Sprachen und Dolmetscher Institut München, Germany (SDI) Universitatea Politehnica Timisoara, Romania (UPT) Zavod RISA, Slovenia (RISA)
Output O6 (IO6):	Certification
Coordinating organization:	ECQA GMBH, Austria

August 2023, Vienna and Krems



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

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ABSTRACT:

This report outlines the aims, the development and the results obtained during the Intellectual Output 6 (IO6), Certification, which has been a transversal process and activity: IO6 started already with IO1 and expanded throughout the whole project. A proposal of certification for TRAIN2VALIDATE was designed, taking into account existing courses and certification for easy-to-read (E2R) facilitators and validators at national and European level. ECQA GmbH monitored and advised partners on the design and development of the skills cards for E2R validators and facilitators (IO1 and IO2), and on the creation of the appropriate curriculum and training materials (IO3 and IO4) by following the standards and requirements of ECQA. The discussions amongst partners about different certification models lead to the specific Certification Scheme for TRAIN2VALIDATE with a clear pathway of what has been achieved and what needs to be done in the future.

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1. INTRODUCTION

European-wide certification with standardised processes is one of the major ways to assure transferability and sustainability of EU project results. With a common standard, professionals and their clients can rely on transparency and the same quality of services rendered throughout the EU. This is particularly true for the growing number of accessibility professionals in the European Union who did not have a common standard and competences framework yet.

ECQA, the European Certification and Qualification Association, and its commercial daughter, the ECQA GmbH, have long experience in defining, describing, and certifying the skills and competencies needed in new and emerging professions, where no or too heterogenous trainings are available, such as for easy-to-read (E2R) validators and facilitators.

ECQA certification processes were explained to and discussed with all TRAIN2VALIDATE partners and applied within the entire project: From the development of the skills cards to the certification of training materials, to enable and create sustainability of the courses and of the certification of professionals after the end of the project.

ECQA GmbH provided input and guidance for IO1 (Common methodological framework and best practices in validation across Europe) and intensely monitored and contributed to IO2 (Skills cards for the two professional roles involved in validation: facilitators and validators). Based on the skills cards for E2R validators and facilitators compiled in IO2, ECQA guided and monitored the development and assessment of the curricula and high-quality training materials of TRAIN2VALIDATE in IO3 (Curriculum design), IO4 (Open educational resources: creation of training materials) and IO5 (Assessment of open educational resources).

This report outlines the aims, the development and the results obtained during the Intellectual Output 6 (IO6), which is a comprehensive process that started with IO1 and expanded throughout the entire TRAIN2VALIDATE project:

Output identification: IO6**Output title: Certification****Description:**

To design a proposal of certification for TRAIN2VALIDATE, the workflow of IO6 followed the following steps:

- ECQA, the European Certification and Qualification Association, monitored and advise partners on the design and development of the ECQA certified skills cards for easy-to-read (E2R) validators and facilitators (IO1 and IO2), and on the creation of the appropriate curriculum and training materials (IO3 and IO4) by following the standards and requirements of ECQA.
- ECQA collected data about planned or implemented certification pathways at European level, mainly in similar EU projects, such as EASIT, LTA or ILSA.
- Each TRAIN2VALIDATE partner collected information about existing solutions of similar educational certifications in its own country, it is at national level.
- Within the entire project, there have been common discussions amongst partners about different models to implement a certification for both E2R validators and facilitators profiles.
- All parts of the final IO6 report were discussed and reviewed by all partners throughout the whole project. IO6 started already with IO1.

Period of implementation: September 2020 to August 2023

Note: this report uses the terms “easy-to-read validators” or “validators” and “easy-to-read facilitators” and “facilitators” as synonyms along the document.

2. IO DEVELOPMENT

In this section we include information on the intellectual output aim, team, methodology and workflow.

2.1. AIM

The main aim of IO6 is to provide sustainable and transferable project results by applying the ECQA certification methodology and processes to all Intellectual Outputs of TRAIN2VALIDATE.

The major tasks to reach this aim were:

- The provision and explanation of ECQA templates and standardised procedures to identify (IO1) and describe (IO2) the skills and competences needed for E2R facilitators and validators.
- The advising for and monitoring of the development of both skills cards in IO2.
- The quality assessment of both skills cards, see IO2 Report, chapter 2.5.1. ASSESSMENT BY ECQA.
- The input and discussion of the structure and design of the curricula in IO3, to safeguard compliance with ECQA certification requirements, see IO3 Report.
- The advising for and monitoring of the creation of open educational resources and training materials in IO4, complying to ECQA certification requirements, and entirely reflecting the TRAIN2VALIDATE skills cards developed in IO2.
- The input and guidance for the assessment of open educational resources in IO5 in line with ECQA standards and processes.
- The collection of data about planned or implemented certification pathways at European level, mainly in similar EU projects, such as EASIT, LTA or ILSA, and the discussion of existing solutions of similar certifications at national level in in partners' countries.
- The continued discussions about different models to implement a certification for both E2R validators and facilitators profiles.

2.2. TEAM

IO6 was coordinated by a team from ECQA GMBH, Austria, consisting of the following members:

- **Gabriele Sauberer, ECQA GMBH, Austria**

- **Kurt Ditmeier, ECQA GMBH, Austria**
- **Michael Reiner, ECQA GMBH, Austria**
- **Jana Faschinger-Sanborn, ECQA GMBH, Austria**

with the continuous support of all project partners, represented by

- **Annamaria Kilyeni**, Politehnica University Timișoara, Romania
- **Carlo Eugeni**, Scuola Superiore per Mediatori Linguistici, Italy
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- **Simona Șimon**, Politehnica University Timișoara, Romania
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2.3. MILESTONES

Considering and applying ECQA Certification has been a transversal process and activity, to enable transferable and sustainable project results. IO6 started already with IO1 and expanded throughout the whole project.

The following milestones could be reached by TRAIN2VALIDATE partners, with the input, guidance and assessment of ECQA GmbH:

In IO1 (Common methodological framework and best practices in validation across Europe): Most of the facilitators and validators who answered the survey believe that they need better skills and knowledge (233 answers representing 69.1% of the answers received), that they are very likely to enrol in a program to become certified validators / facilitators (168 – 49.9%), and that they are very likely to recommend such programs to their peers (198 – 58.8%) (Questions 5.8, 5.9 and 5.10 in the survey).

This is a highly promising result, confirming the relevance of the European certification provided by ECQA. Due to the advising and input from ECQA, the questions in the survey could be fine-tuned in such a way that the answers were significant and relevant.

In IO2 (Skills cards for the two professional roles involved in validation: facilitators and validators), both skills cards for E2R professionals (validators and facilitators) fully comply to the quality standards and certification requirements of ECQA and ECQA GmbH.

The ECQA certified skills cards of TRAIN2VALIDATE are the sound basis for all future certification activities of E2R professionals all over Europe and the world, following the success story of the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL – ICDL). The skills cards for E2R validators and facilitators build the core of the ECQA certified trainings and certificates, and of the transferability and sustainability of the project results.

In IO3 (Curriculum design), the structure and design of the curricula fully comply with ECQA standards and procedures: Each curriculum is divided into Units, divided into Elements. Elements describe the knowledge, skills and competences that learners should acquire by means of Learning Outcomes. This structure maps the skills cards for facilitators and validators, as proposed in the Intellectual Output number 2, monitored by ECQA.

The curricula for facilitators and validators of E2R texts are not only certified because they meet the ECQA standards but also because they offer trainees the opportunity of undergoing a certification process: The ECQA certified materials for both vocational and academic students allow TRAIN2VALIDATE to meet the goal of providing a recognized international status for facilitators and validators of E2R content, in the form of a European certification scheme provided by ECQA.

In IO4 (Open educational resources: creation of training materials), where ECQA guided and monitored the development of the TRAIN2VALIDATE training materials, a high-quality training course was developed and is available free of charge.

This valuable open educational resource will not only raise the interest of accessibility professionals in the profile and job role of E2R validators and **facilitators**, but also empower E2R professionals to get recognition and awareness by an intense training followed by a renowned European certificate.

In **IO5** (Assessment of open educational resources), the assessment tools and criteria developed provide added value to the certification **requirements** and quality guidelines of ECQA. They will be included in the general certification process of ECQA GmbH.

In **IO6** (Certification), except the milestones reached in all other Intellectual Outputs described above, a Certification Scheme has been developed for **TRAIN2VALIDATE** that constitutes a pathway to a future common certificate for accessibility professionals. The Certification Scheme includes a survey of existing and missing certification in all partner countries, as well as possible developments and suggestions to adapt the ECQA certification for E2R validators.

2.4. EXISTING CERTIFICATION FOR E2R PROFESSIONALS

All TRAIN2VALIDATE partners collected data about existing E2R certification at national level.

Result: There is no independent third-party certification available for E2R professionals.

Although E2R courses and trainings are offered in all partner countries (Austria, Germany, Italy, Spain and Slovenia) except Romania, the certificates available are either certificates of attendance, or competence-based certificates issued by the training providers themselves, which does not comply to European and International Standards for Certification, according to ISO/IEC 17024:2012 Conformity assessment — General requirements for bodies operating certification of persons.

At European level, the analysis of similar projects was done by ECQA and showed that only the LTA project offers a third-party certificate, issued by ECQA GmbH who was the LTA project partner for certification:

The LTA project – Live Text Access developed the entire certification process together with ECQA: Independent third-party certification is provided by ECQA GmbH, for the job role ECQA Certified Intralingual Real-Time Subtitler (Respeaker and Velotypist): <http://ltaproject.eu/>.

In the EASIT project – Easy Access for Social Inclusion Training, there is an IO for proposing possible certification in the future. EASIT is following the ECQA Certification Criteria and Guidelines: <https://webs.uab.cat/easit/resultat-6/> although ECQA was not involved in the project.

In the ILSA project – Interlingual Live Subtitling for Access, there is no Intellectual Output for certification, and no certification pathway is foreseen: <http://ka2-ilsa.webs.uvigo.es/project/>.

The following overview briefly summarises the qualification and certification situation for E2R professionals in the TRAIN2VALIDATE partners countries:

2.4.1. GERMAN SPEAKING COUNTRIES

In Germany, there are several E2R courses at basic, intermediate, and advanced levels. However, the certificates offered are issued by the training providers themselves. As mentioned above, this is not in compliance with European and International Standards for Certification of Persons.

In Austria and Switzerland, there are a few training courses, but no certificates offered by the training organisations.

2.4.2. ITALY

In Italy, there are no trainings or certifications for E2R validators and facilitators. There is a tentative course to become an E2R writer, but not a certification.

2.4.3. ROMANIA

In Romania, there are almost no E2R materials on the market (cf. Şimon, S., Dejica, D., Fărcaşiu, M.A., Kilyeni, A. 2022), and no associations to offer training in E2R or anything similar. Research showed that there is no tradition in writing E2R content so far. The Romanian partners of TRAIN2VALIDATE did change this situation in Romania during the course of the project.

2.4.4. SLOVENIA

In Slovenia, only Zavod RISA, the TRAIN2VALIDATE project partner from Slovenia, is offering trainings, also in cooperation with the Faculty of Education at University of Maribor. There is no certification available. This will also change in the future, since ECQA has good practice with joint ECQA-University certificates.

2.4.5. SPAIN

In Spain, there are several very targeted courses for E2R validators and facilitators, but no certification is offered. Plena Inclusión Madrid, the organisation leading the TRAIN2VALIDATE project, has a very strong interest in implementing the certification for E2R professionals proposed by ECQA.

3. FINAL RESULTS

The aim and purpose of IO6 were not to create full certification for the profiles of E2R validators and facilitators, but to develop and describe the pathways and possible developments of a future TRAIN2VALIDATE certification for these two profiles, after the end of the project.

However, some of the core elements for future certification could be developed already during the project period, mainly:

- ✓ ECQA Certified E2R validator and E2R facilitator (job roles or profiles)
- ✓ ECQA Certified skills cards for E2R validators and E2R facilitators
- ✓ ECQA Certified training materials and courses for E2R validators and E2R facilitators
- ✓ ECQA Certified self-assessment questions (included in the task sheets of all Learning Elements)
- ✓ ECQA Certified Trainers for E2R validators and E2R facilitators (the project partners who developed the trainings)

What needs to be done in the future, after the end of the TRAIN2VALIDATE project, is to certify:

- the persons (trainees, experts, professionals),
- the trainers (other than the project partners),
- training organisations,
- exam questions, and
- exam organisations.

The processes for the achieved and the remaining parts of the ECQA certification are described in the following chapters.

3.1. THE ECQA CERTIFICATION PROCESS

ECQA provides a world-wide unified certification scheme for new and emerging professions and job roles or job profiles. The same exam pool, exam rules and the same electronic exam system are used for certification exams in any participating country.

The certification procedure offers modularity of certification. This also assures modularity of trainings all over the world. Only verified and approved organisations and individuals may become ECQA certified service providers, experts, trainers, etc.

ECQA Certification is independent third-party certification.

ECQA is independent, because it does not act as a training body for E2R, accessibility, or any other job roles. The independent certification body ECQA GmbH issues a statement (a certificate), that a person fulfilled specified requirements. These requirements are specified in the TRAIN2VALIDATE skills cards (see IO2 Report) and certification schemes for candidates, as well as in ECQA Guidelines.

To assure the same level of quality and transferability world-wide, ECQA defines and verifies quality criteria for all parts and levels of certification.

ECQA certifies, according to ECQA standards, procedures and quality guidelines:

- job roles and professions,
- persons (trainees, experts, professionals),
- skill cards (competences frameworks),
- training materials,
- trainers,
- training organisations,
- self-assessment questions,
- exam questions, and
- exam organisations.

In TRAIN2VALIDATE, the job roles of E2R validators and E2R facilitators have been certified, as well as the respective skills cards. The project developed high-quality ECQA certified training materials and courses for E2R validators and E2R facilitators, containing also ECQA certified self-assessment questions in the task sheets of all Learning Elements.

All TRAIN2VALIDATE project partners created training units and elements, and the respective self-assessment questions. They are the first ECQA Certified Trainers for E2R validators and E2R facilitators, and received their ECQA certificates at the end of the project.

This result is a sound basis for the proposed certification scheme for TRAIN2VALIDATE:

3.2. CERTIFICATION SCHEME FOR TRAIN2VALIDATE

Certification is a complex topic often misunderstood or confusing. Certification processes need a good understanding of the concept of certification, and of the certification steps and requirements.

This is the reason why ECQA explained and discussed the ECQA certification process very early and many times to the TRAIN2VALIDATE project partners.

A basic understanding of certification in general is needed, to understand the difference of the use of certification in general language (e.g. a certificate of attendance) and in specialised language: certification is always provided by an independent, third party (a certifying body), not by a training provider who offers a course with a certificate of attendance. A certificate of attendance is just a confirmation that a person attended a course, not a confirmation that a person has certain skills and competences, as given in a real certificate issued by an independent third party.

ECQA explained certification and the certification processes already at the kick-off meeting, also specifically in a workshop in the Transnational Project Meeting 2 in June 2021, and in many project meetings (in monthly online meetings, as well as in TPMs and at MEs).

The relevant certification topics presented and discussed were:

1. What is Certification?
2. How does ECQA certify job roles?
3. How to get certified by ECQA?
 - as professional
 - as trainer
 - as training and exam organisation
4. Who/What is ECQA?
5. Ways of working with ECQA

In these presentations and discussions, Dr. Gabriele Sauberer, MBA, President of the non-profit association ECQA and shareholder of ECQA GmbH, explained all the details around certification and ECQA (GmbH) certificates relevant for the TRAIN2VALIDATE certification, as summarized in the given IO6 report.

The certification scheme for TRAIN2VALIDATE includes the following, already accomplished parts:

- ✓ ECQA Certified job roles E2R validators and E2R facilitators
- ✓ ECQA Certified skills cards for E2R validators and E2R facilitators
- ✓ ECQA Certified training materials and courses for E2R validators and E2R facilitators
- ✓ ECQA Certified self-assessment questions (included in the task sheets of all Learning Elements)
- ✓ ECQA Certified Trainers for E2R validators and E2R facilitators (the project partners who developed the trainings)

and the following remaining parts, to be accomplished after the end of the TRAIN2VALIDATE project:

- Certification of E2R validators and E2R facilitators,
- Certification of trainers (others than the project partners) for these job roles,
- Certification of training organisations for the TRAIN2VALIDATE courses,
- Certification of exam questions, and
- Certification of exam organisations.

3.2.1 CERTIFICATION OF E2R VALIDATORS AND FACILITATORS

To qualify as ECQA Certified professionals in a certain field, candidates must successfully pass exams, usually both oral and written exams.

Oral exams, project presentations or interviews in front of a jury of experts usually are more important than a written multiple-choice test, since an ECQA Certificate, similar to a driving licence, is confirming the practical skills of persons holding this certificate.

The ECQA methodology follows the success story of the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL). What ECDL is for computer skills, ECQA certificates are for skills and competences in new and emerging job roles, profiles or professions, such as E2R facilitators and validators.

ECQA Certification is governed by the following principles:

- Free and equal access for all applicants,
- Evaluation criteria are outlined in specified standards and reference documents (skills cards and certification guidelines)
- Scope of certification is restricted to the contents of these reference documents.

Only the competences (knowledge, skills and attitudes) of natural persons are certified.

The certification is largely based on the principles of the International Standard ISO/IEC 17024:2012-07 Conformity assessment - General requirements for bodies certifying persons.

By issuing a certificate according to the TRAIN2VALIDATE certification guidelines, ECQA GmbH confirms that certified persons are competent to act as E2R validators and E2R facilitators. This means that the certificate is much more a practical “driving licence” for the given job role than a confirmation about theoretical skills a person has in the field of E2R.

According to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) levels, the TRAIN2VALIDATE skills cards is basic, not advanced. However, the training materials contain also optional units targeted towards a higher level, e.g. in advanced computer skills, and: The proficiency level described in the skills cards refers to two main formats: print texts and web content. For these two formats, candidates should acquire an intermediate to advanced level. Knowledge and skills for other formats, for instance, audiovisual content should be acquired in specialized courses (e.g., audio description, subtitling), see IO2 Report.

What still needs to be done to certify E2R validators and E2R facilitators is to:

1. **Develop Certification Guidelines for E2R validators:** A) Include suggestions from project partners and external experts on how to adapt the ECQA standard certification to the specific needs of E2R validators. B) Describe all requirements and procedures of the certification for E2R validators, and specify the steps and conditions: 1) Scope, 2) Requirements for competence including TRAIN2VALIDATE skill card for E2R validators, 3) Requirements for admission to the oral examination (requirements for candidates and for exam organisations), including procedures for persons who have work experience, 4) Written examinations/Multiple-Choice Exam, 5) Evaluation Criteria (for oral and written exams, and for overall examination and examination repetition), 6) Issue and validity of certificates, and 7) Recertification.
2. **Develop Certification Guidelines for E2R facilitators:** Describe all requirements and procedures of the certification for E2R facilitators, and specify the steps and conditions: 1) Scope, 2) Requirements for competence including skills cards, 3) Requirements for admission to the oral examination (requirements for candidates and for exam organisations), including procedures for persons who have work experience, 4) Written examinations/Multiple-Choice Exam, 5) Evaluation Criteria (for oral and written exams, and for overall examination and examination repetition), 6) Issue and validity of certificates, and 7) Recertification.
3. **Develop exam questions for the oral and written examinations,** according to the ECQA quality standards and certification requirements (see chapter 3.2.4).
4. **Join the ECQA Focus Group Accessibility and the Job Role Committee E2R validator and E2R facilitator** to maintain and update the skills cards and exam questions on a regular basis (see chapter 3.2.4), and to organize the juries for oral examinations.

3.2.2 CERTIFICATION OF TRAINERS

TRAIN2VALIDATE trainers are competent professionals in the field of E2R, certified by ECQA GmbH.

The TRAIN2VALIDATE project partners are the first ECQA Certified trainers for the job roles ECQA Certified Trainer for E2R Facilitators, or ECQA Certified Trainer for E2R Validators, according to their competences and contributions to the ECQA Certified Training Materials developed within the TRAIN2VALIDATE project.

They will receive a so-called Developer Certificate. A Developer Certificate indicates that the certified person actively contributed to the development of the skill card, the training materials and the exam questions of a given job role, and therefore is not allowed to sit the exam as other trainers who did not design exam questions are obliged to do.

Professionals who want to become ECQA Certified Trainers for the job role E2R validator and/or E2R facilitator need to follow the Rules and Process Steps for Certification of ECQA Trainers (see annex 1).

Trainers have to prove experience in the job role E2R validator and/or E2R facilitator. Their work experience has to be documented by references from companies or organisations.

Required is also a minimum of coaching by an already ECQA certified TRAIN2VALIDATE trainer, with a positive feedback at the end of the coaching. A trainer candidate can also act as a co-trainer for an already ECQA certified trainer.

The trainer also has to prove trainer experience or former consulting and development in the field of digital accessibility. A list of former teachings, courses, consulting or development has to be provided in the certification process. The trainer has to provide evidence that they have held industrial or university courses, or performed consultancy or development projects in the field.

The certifying body ECQA GmbH has to approve or disapprove any trainer candidate. ECQA GmbH can ask members of the Focus Group Accessibility to evaluate trainer applications according to the standardised criteria.

A pass/fail criteria is any evaluation with “poor” in the following table:

Table 1. Pass/fail criteria for the certification of trainers

Proven former teaching, consulting or development in the field.	poor	fair	good	excellent
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Teachings, consulting or development are related to the skills card.				
Proven expertise in the field by publications or references				

ECQA has standardised rules and process steps for the certification of trainers These rules are annexed to this report in annex 1.

What needs to be done to certify trainers (other than project partners) in the future is to:

1. **Promote the free TRAIN2VALIDATE online course:** All partners are interested in exploiting the results of the project, in particular the open educational resources. The training course for E2R validators and E2R facilitators is a most valuable tool to promote the certification of persons and the certification of trainers and training organisations.
2. **Inform training organisations** about the possibility to get certified as training organisation, with the prerequisite of having at least 1 ECQA certified trainer for the job role, see chapter 3.2.3.

3.2.3 CERTIFICATION OF TRAINING ORGANISATIONS

Only ECQA Certified training organisations are allowed to conduct ECQA Certified training courses.

The basic prerequisite to become an ECQA Certified Training Organisation is to already have one ECQA Certified Trainer for the respective job role. It can be an in-house trainer or an external trainer working for the training organisation.

All training bodies, also universities and Higher Education Institutions, who want to become an ECQA Certified Training Organisation for one or several ECQA Certified Job Roles, need to formally apply and sign a contract with ECQA:

The application form contains a Declaration of Compliance with the ECQA certified skills card and test systems (currently the Bizexaminer system). This declaration is mandatory, and contains the following statement:

I hereby declare that our organisation will

- use and promote the test systems offered by ECQA,

- comply with ECQA Quality Standards and Rules,
- provide evidence of compliance in this application and in future audits by ECQA GmbH.

Training organisations need to provide ECQA GmbH with their general data, the signed declaration of compliance, and with the following data package:

- The Certificate of the ECQA Certified Trainer the organisation will use or assign;
- Evidence of Compliance with ECQA Quality Standards and Rules:
 - Rules and Process Steps for the Certification of ECQA Training Organisations (see annex 2)
 - Rules and Process Steps for Certification of ECQA Trainers (see annex 1).

The ECQA certificate for Training Organisations is valid for 3 years provided that the conditions to maintain the certificate are met by the organisation.

To maintain the certificate, ECQA GmbH carries out surveillance audits. These audits are done every year, remotely via teleconference software or, if necessary, also on-site at the training organisation. Based on the audit findings and conclusions of the ECQA Auditor, ECQA GmbH will decide on the issuance or maintenance of the certificate.

ECQA Auditors are formally trained auditors who have in-depth knowledge about ECQA Quality Standards and the Rules and Process Steps for the Certification of ECQA Trainers and Training Organisations.

TRAIN2VALIDATE project partners expressed a strong interest in becoming the first ECQA Certified training and exam organisations for ECQA Certified E2R validators and E2R facilitators.

To certify TRAIN2VALIDATE organisations will substantially contribute to the transferability and sustainability of the TRAIN2VALIDATE project.

What needs to be done to certify training organisation in the future is to:

1. **Certify the organisations of the TRAIN2VALIDATE project partners:** Sign agreements with those partners who are interested in becoming an ECQA certified training organisation for TRAIN2VALIDATE courses. The training course for E2R validators and E2R facilitators is a most valuable course that can be added to the training offer of organisations and universities.
2. **Promote the course amongst training organisations** and inform them about the benefits of an ECQA certified training organisation. Promote the trainers already certified.

3.2.4 CERTIFICATION OF EXAM QUESTIONS

The standard ECQA procedure for the creation of exam question is that the Job Role Committee (JRC) of a certain job role develops 1 self-assessment question and 3-4 exam questions per learning outcome, following the rules and quality standards of ECQA:

- For the creation of multiple-choice questions (MCQs) a predefined excel template has to be used, for the upload to the bizexaminer software used by ECQA GmbH.
- The structure of the excel template must not be changed. Columns are not allowed to be shifted or deleted, only (new) lines may be inserted or deleted.
- The structure of the MCQs must be the same as the structure of the skills card: The Learning Outcomes (LOs) with assigned MCQs shall be included in the excel template.
- The Job Role Committee (JRC) or the ECQA Focus Group agrees on the type and mix of MCQs used (e.g.: Multiple Choice with multiple response or single response, etc.).

Exam questions must be different from self-assessment questions.

Multiple choice questions for self-assessment are provided online at the ECQA exam portal called bizexaminer. Self-assessment is free of charge, to get feedback from professionals and promote the new job role and certificate.

ECQA GMBH assures that the pools of exam questions used within exams for all job roles are available, up to date, professional and large enough to assure relevant exams. At least three questions exist for each Learning Outcome within each Element of all Units to be randomly selected for an exam. Pools of test questions are updated at least every two years by ECQA Focus Groups or Job Role Committees.

ECQA Focus Groups and Job Role Committees.

One of the main strengths and European relevance of the ECQA certification is the fact that ECQA joins and works with experts and practitioners in the respective field and supports the definition and development of the competences (knowledge, skills and attitudes) required for new and emerging job profiles and job roles. This is done and organised within ECQA Focus Groups (FGs) and Job Role Committees (JRCs).

ECQA revised and updated its certification processes during 2021 and 2022, following a new strategy: Instead of having many different job roles that are focussed only on the particular skills

necessary for their job role, ECQA and ECQA GmbH foster the creation of a large European skills and competences portfolio with Focus Groups who are sharing competences rather than skills.

A Job Role Committee (JRC) is composed of representatives from the respective industry, academia and other stakeholders. In the past, any ECQA JRC had to comprise experts from at least three different countries, which stressed the European dimension of the job role and the JRC. At present, JRCs are organised within and encouraged to work together in larger teams who represent Focus Groups (FGs), such as the FG Accessibility in the case of TRAIN2VALIDATE. This is why JRCs do not need to be composed of at least three different countries any longer.

An ECQA Focus Group is an international working group of distinguished experts and professionals who commit their work to safeguard the quality standards of ECQA. They work together in a cluster of job roles, e.g. in the cluster »Accessibility«, »Innovation« or »Sustainability« to maintain the skills cards, exam questions and relevant stakeholders of these clusters.

FG members are individuals (often nominated by organisations) who are experts in the FG domain, with a high interest in European standardization. They apply for membership in the FG by submitting their Curriculum Vitae with a description of their motivation to join the FG. The FG votes by simple majority on their application.

ECQA JRCs and Focus Groups are a key success factors for the quality of an ECQA Certificate. If a job role belongs to a new or emerging profession where no or very heterogeneous training is available - which usually is the case with ECQA job roles -, the JRC also needs to apply for the certification of the job role. This was not the case in the TRAIN2VALIDATE project, where the TRAIN2VALIDATE project consortium was funded by the European Commission to establish the new job roles E2R validators and E2R facilitators. This is enough proof of the relevance of an ECQA Job Role and the qualification of the JRC.

Within the TRAIN2VALIDATE project, the first JRC has been the entire project consortium that developed the skills cards, training materials and self-assessment questions. ECQA presented and explained JRC agreements and Focus Groups to the TRAIN2VALIDATE partners, to prepare the establishment of the new JRC E2R Validator and E2R Facilitator within the Focus Group Accessibility after the end of the project.

What needs to be done to certify training organisation in the future is to:

1. **Fill in the existing self-assessment questions from the TRAIN2VALIDATE task sheets in the MCQs excel template:** Use the excel template provided by ECQA GmbH and follow all the instructions and quality rules provided by ECQA GmbH.
2. **Create exam questions** using the same excel template and procedure provided by ECQA GmbH.
3. **Build a JRC within the FG Accessibility:** Job Role Committee (JRC) Agreement should be signed by as many TRAIN2VALIDATE partners as possible, to secure the quality and sustainability of the new profile and the respective certification for E2R Validators and E2R Facilitators.

For academic partners, the process of applying for the official signature of the university Dean often is difficult and time consuming. ECQA will reach out to these university partners on a regular basis to follow-up the offer and discussions about their official membership in the Focus Group Accessibility, and in the Job Role Committee E2R Validator and E2R Facilitator.

The TRAIN2VALIDATE JRC Agreement is annexed to this report, see annex 3.

The scope of the TRAIN2VALIDATE JRC Agreement is the collaboration between the Non-Profit Organisation European Certification and Qualification Association (ECQA) NPO and a Job Role Committee (JRC) member within the Focus Group (FG) Accessibility.

The JRC agreement is a proof that ECQA has officially granted the member a position in the JRC ECQA Certified E2R Validator and E2R Facilitator – basic level, within the Focus Group Accessibility.

The role and duties of an ECQA Job Role Committee and Focus Group member, as well as the role and duties of ECQA NPO in a Focus Group are described in annex 4.

3.2.5 CERTIFICATION OF EXAM ORGANISATIONS

Only ECQA Certified training organisations are allowed to conduct ECQA exams.

A TRAIN2VALIDATE Exam Organisation holds examinations for the Job Role ECQA Certified E2R Validator and/or E2R Facilitator, using the exam material and exam portal provided by ECQA GmbH. Currently, as of August 2023, this is the exam system Bizexaminer.

The Exam Organisation performs certification activities strictly and exclusively according to ECQA rules.

The Exam Organisation has the right to perform other certification activities outside of ECQA Certification Schemes independently and without any obligation to ECQA.

All steps and requirements of the ECQA standards for the certification of Exam Organisations must be followed and met. They are described in the Agreement between ECQA GmbH and Exam Organisation candidates.

One of the most important requirements is the avoidance of any conflict of interest, according to ISO 17024:

The examiner must not be the trainer of an TRAIN2VALIDATE training for the examination candidates. Employees of the Exam Organisation are not allowed to perform TRAIN2VALIDATE trainings and be the examiner at the same time, to avoid conflict of interest.

However, if the Exam Organisation has also a training department or enough staff, it is possible to act both as ECQA Certified Training Organisation and Exam Organisation, as long as different staff is used:

The Exam Organisation has to prove that examiners were not the trainers of examination candidates.

What needs to be done to certify training organisation in the future is to:

1. **Certify at least 1 organisation of the TRAIN2VALIDATE project partners:** Sign an agreement with those partners who are interested in becoming an ECQA certified exam organisation for TRAIN2VALIDATE examinations. Most likely, this will be first Plena Inclusión Madrid in Spain, followed by Zavod RISA, Center za splosno, funkcionalno in kulturno opismenjevanje in Slovenia. These two organisations are independent and flexible from university structures, and the driving forces of E2R in their countries.
2. **Perform the first examinations and certify E2R validators and E2R facilitators.**

As long as there is no ECQA certified exam organisation for the TRAIN2VALIDATE job roles, ECQA GmbH is the default exam organisation.

3.3. ADAPTATIONS FOR E2R VALIDATORS

The ECQA certification requirements and processes are highly standardized, to be widely in compliance with the international standard ISO/IEC 17024:2012 Conformity assessment — General requirements for bodies operating certification of persons.

However, they are adaptable to specific needs and requirements, as for E2R validators, as discussed and explained by TRAIN2VALIDATE partners during the project:

1. We cannot expect E2R validators - people with intellectual disabilities - to sit the same online written exams as E2R facilitators. This means that the focus of the examination should be on oral questions and practical project presentations. If the TRAIN2VALIDATE JRC agrees on written exams in the future, the exam software bizexaminer of ECQA GmbH must be checked for suitability for E2R facilitators. Written exams could be assessed also offline, and a proof could be uploaded at bizexaminer.
2. Accessibility of the certification platform Bizexaminer, provided by ECQA GmbH, is crucial. Also for E2R facilitators, it is important to have a professional, accessible exam platform to get certified. ECQA GmbH needs to walk the talk and provide accessibility professionals a fully accessible exam platform.

What needs to be done to certify E2R Validators in the future is to:

1. **Adapt the standard ECQA examination to the needs of E2R validators:** The future TRAIN2VALIDATE JRC has to agree on oral and written exams for E2R validators, and to specify the requirements in the Certification Guide provided by ECQA GmbH to candidates. In case if written exams are assessed offline, the TRAIN2VALIDATE JRC has to organize appropriate resources to do so, and to assign assessors to upload a proof of the written exam to the bizexaminer exam platform.
2. **Make the exam software bizexaminer fully accessible:** The future TRAIN2VALIDATE JRC has to check the exam software bizexaminer of ECQA GmbH for suitability for E2R facilitators. ECQA GmbH shall make the exam platform fully accessible according to Digital Accessibility Standards.

3.4. ASSESSMENT BY AN EXTERNAL EXPERT

Assessment of the IO6 report was provided by Martin Neureiter, an ECQA Board Member and expert in certification of social responsibility.

The external expert was asked the following questions about the proposed certification and certification pathways for TRAIN2VALIDATE:

1. Is the Certification Scheme appropriate to the special requirements of the project?
2. Is there anything that you miss?
3. Is there any part you find not necessary?
4. Is the proposed certification compliant with ECQA standards and procedures?
5. Is the size of the report appropriate?

Questions 1, 3, 4 and 5 were answered by Martin Neureiter with a clear YES, question 2 with NO.

4. DISSEMINATION AND VISIBILITY OF THE RESEARCH RESULTS

4.1. CONFERENCES AND PUBLICATIONS

The dissemination of the results obtained in the project is an ongoing activity. The project members managed to disseminate some of the research results at some international conferences, highly visible in the academia, presented below and detailed in what follows:

Table 2. List of events and publications where the project was disseminated

No	Date	Title	Event or publication	Organiser or publisher	Title of presentation / publication	Speakers
1.	July 2020 - August 2023	Regular discussions with European accessibility stakeholders	(e-) meetings	ECQA GmbH and ECQA, Focus Group Accessibility	TRAIN2VALIDATE and the new job roles of E2R validators and E2R facilitators	Gabriele Sauberer Michael Reiner
2.	March 26-27, 2021	12 th International conference on professional communication and translation studies	T2V Panel at international conference	Department of Communication and Foreign Languages, Politehnica University of Timisoara (Romania)	European Certificates for Accessibility Professionals	Gabriele Sauberer
3.	May 26, 2021	The status of training programs for validators and facilitators in Europe	Multiplier Event (ME1), online (Zoom)	Polytechnic University of Timisoara.	European Certificates for Easy to Read (E2R) Professionals: E2R Validators and E2R Facilitators	Gabriele Sauberer
4.	July 1-4, 2021	International Terminology Summer School 2021	Summer School	International Network for Terminology (TermNet)	New job roles for language professionals. Terminology and Easy-to-Read, Live-Text Subtitling and Digital Accessibility	Rocío Bernabé Caro, Gabriele Sauberer

No	Date	Title	Event or publication	Organiser or publisher	Title of presentation / publication	Speakers
5.	September 1-3, 2021	EuroAsiaSPI ² 2021	Workshop	Springer International	Workshop: Accessibility, Team Skills and Diversity	Gabriele Sauberer
6.	May 23, 2022	Live Interviews with T2V partners	Live Interviews, Zoom and YouTube	ECQA and ECQA GmbH	Train2Validate Interview Panel	Óscar García, Carlo Eugeni, Daniel Dejica, Tatjana Knapp, Gabriele Sauberer
7.	June 20, 2022	ECQA Newsletter 3/2022	Newsletter	ECQA GmbH	Train to Validate (T2V) Project	Gabriele Sauberer
8.	August 31, 2022	IMPACT Multiplier Event @ EuroSPI 2022	ME of the IMPACT Project	ECQA GmbH, Springer International	ECQA Certified Accessibility Professionals: Digital Accessibility and Easy-to-read validators and facilitators	Gabriele Sauberer
9.	March 8, 2023	European Accessibility Center	Online Meeting	ONCE	How to certify accessibility professionals at EU level. The example of TRAIN2VALIDATE	Gabriele Sauberer
10.	July 17-21, 2023	International Terminology Summer School 2023	Summer School	International Network for Terminology (TermNet)	ECQA Certificates for Language and Accessibility Professionals: Easy-to-Read and Digital Accessibility	Gabriele Sauberer

4.2. MULTIPLIER EVENTS

Contents referred to IO6 had specific slots in the following Train2Validate multiplier events:

- Multiplier Event (ME1) – *The Status of Training Programs for Validators and Facilitators in Europe* – of the TRAIN2VALIDATE project was organized online, on May 26, 2021, by Politehnica University Timisoara, with the support of Plena Inclusión Madrid. IO6 has a specific slot about the directions for professional development of E2R validators and facilitators.
- Multiplier Event (ME2) – *Skills cards for new professional roles: easy-to-read validators and facilitators* – of the TRAIN2VALIDATE project was organized online, on October 27, 2021, by Plena Inclusión Madrid, with the participation of all partners as panellists. IO6 has a specific slot about professions in the accessibility industry.
- Multiplier Event (ME3) – *International seminar on Easy-to-Read language* – of the TRAIN2VALIDATE project was organized face-to-face, on April 7, 2022, by Scuola Superiore per Mediatori Linguistici, Pisa, in collaboration with Accademia Giuseppe Aliprandi - Flaviano Rodriguez and Associazione "onA.I.R.". The venue was Scuola Superiore per Mediatori

Linguistici (SSML), Pisa, with the participation of all partners as panellists. IO6 has a specific slot about the certification for E2R facilitators and validators.

- Multiplier Event (ME5) – *Europe’s Easy-to-Read Validators: Embarking on an Adventure!* – of the TRAIN2VALIDATE project was organised in Ljubljana, face-to-face, on 22 June 2023, by Zavod RISA. The venue was Rotonda Commercial Building (Dunajska c. 167, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenija). IO6 has a specific slot to explain the final conclusions of this part of the project based on the evidence of the skills for E2R facilitators and validators.

4.3. NEWS

News about the TRAIN2VALIDATE have been disseminated via ECQA Newsletters and Social Media (LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube), where ECQA GmbH and Gabriele Sauberer with her personal LinkedIn account reach more than 20.000 accessibility stakeholders.

5. QUALITY INDICATORS

IO6 development and results were assessed internally according to measurable indicators as envisaged in the project application and externally by Martin Neureiter. The next sections provide a short overview of the internal review.

INTERNAL QUALITY INDICATORS

The indicators used for the evaluation included general indicators for Intellectual outputs and IO6 specifically, project management indicators, and communication and dissemination indicators.

All partners participated in IO6. ECQA GmbH, as IO leader, facilitated the necessary tools for its achievement. These included:

- regular updates and discussions at the project progress meetings,
- the creation of a structure for IO6 on the project GDrive,
- the development of a general timeline for the IO6 and each IO6 activity,
- the development of specific indicators together with the TRAIN2VALIDATE Quality managers as requested by the Erasmus Agency,
- the creation of an accessible template together with the accessibility manager, and
- the provision of the ECQA template for the skills cards, which meets the ECQA requirements.

train2validate > 5. Intellectual outputs > IO 6

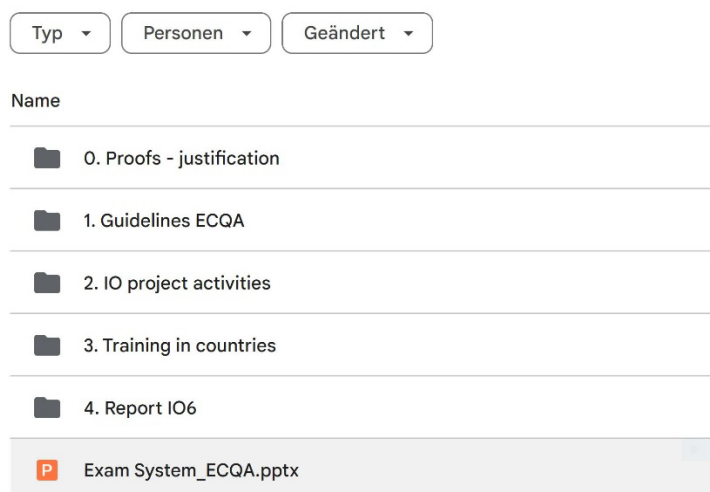


Figure 1. IO6 organization

Measurable indicators for all Intellectual Outputs

The Intellectual Output quality indicators were met (IO indicators).

Table 3. Quality indicators for Intellectual Outputs

ID	Activity	Deliverable	Indicator	Status
IO-1	IO implementation	IO Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The IO has followed the timetable as presented by the IO leader The IO has been delivered in a timely manner The IO has been evaluated following the pre-set performance indicators for each IO 	Fulfilled
IO-2	Writing an IO Report	The report follows the template	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The report follows the template All partners have contributed to the report. 	Fulfilled

Similarly, the indicators specifically set for IO6 were met. Special caution was taken with regards to the compliance with the ECQA requirements for the creation of skills cards and training materials.

6. IMPACT, TRANSFERABILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

This report summarises the work carried out in IO6, which has been a transversal process and activity within the entire TRAIN2VALIDATE project: IO6 started already with IO1 and expanded throughout the whole project and the different stages that led to the results of all IOs.

The impact of IO6 on all other IOs is clear: In IO6, the leading partner ECQA GmbH monitored and advised partners on the design and development of the ECQA certified skills cards for easy-to-read (E2R) validators and facilitators (IO1 and IO2), and on the creation and assessment of the appropriate curriculum and training materials (IO3, IO4 and IO5) by following the standards and requirements of ECQA and ECQA GmbH.

The transferability potential is also obvious: The certification standards of ECQA and ECQA GmbH have been applied in TRAIN2VALIDATE to a large extent and in all IOs, and a clear pathway for future certification of E2R validators and facilitators was proposed in IO6. By following the ECQA processes and certification requirements in IO2, IO3 and IO4, the ECQA certified skills cards for E2R validators and facilitators enable the quality and transferability of these skills cards and of the training materials. The ECQA methodology applied in all IOs will secure that certified E2R validators and facilitators will have the same competences and meet the European ECQA quality standards.

Sustainability is also ensured, because all partners expressed their interest in contributing to the future certification of E2R validators and facilitators after end of the project, by building a Job Role Committee to create and maintain the exam questions, and by becoming ECQA Certified training and exam organisations, in order to fully exploit the TRAIN2VALIDATE results. Most likely, Plena Inclusión Madrid and Zavod RISA in Slovenia will become the first ECQA Certified training and exam organisations. And the university partners SDI Munich, Politehnica Universitatea Timisoara, SSML and can enlarge their educational offer and issue joint certificates with ECQA GmbH. ECQA GmbH will add new certificates to its portfolio, and ECQA will gain more renowned experts in their Focus Group Accessibility that is a driver for certification in accessibility professions.

In conclusion, we strongly believe that the highly standardised outcomes of TRAIN2VALIDATE that have been monitored by ECQA GmbH will be a turning point in the easy-to-read industry and educational sector. For the first time, there is a standardised joint competence framework (the TRAIN2VALIDATE skills cards), standardised training materials, and a sound proposal for future certification and European “driving licence” for E2R validators and facilitators.

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LIST OF ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: Annex 1: Rules and Process Steps for Certification of ECQA Trainers

Annex 2: Rules and Process Steps for the Certification of ECQA Training Organisations

Annex 3: TRAIN2VALIDATE Job Role Committee Agreement

Annex 4: ECQA Focus Group Accessibility