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**THE STATUS OF TRAINING PROGRAMS FOR E2R VALIDATORS AND FACILITATORS IN EUROPE**

# THE STATUS OF TRAINING PROGRAMS FOR E2R VALIDATORS AND FACILITATORS IN EUROPE

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(eds.)

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# IN EUROPE

Lucca: Esedra
2022

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# FOREWORD

This book, "The status of training programs for E2R validators and facilitators in Europe", offers an interesting insight into the validation process of texts written in Easy-to-Read language for the benefit of people with reading difficulties. It is primarily a scientific contribution about a technical aspect that relates to two topics that are the basis of the European Union integration: understanding and inclusion. Understanding means first and foremost to let all the people in the world communicate in an effective manner. Inclusion means participation in the decision-making process, a mission that the European Union is trying to make more and more concrete day after day.

With these two objectives in mind, the European Union has started adopting measures that go in the direction of more understanding and more inclusion. For example, we have asked the European forum of persons with an intellectual disability and their families, *Inclusion Europe,* to translate the main pages of the European Union's website into our 24 official languages' Easy-to-Read version. Also, we have financed the 10-year Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030, which aims at letting everybody enjoy the same EU rights, guaranteeing independent living and autonomy, and securing non-discrimination and equal opportunities for all. These are just a few examples of one of the missions of the European Union, whose motto "united in diversity" has always been the driver for EU bodies' policies in the social sphere.

More generally, while Member States are responsible for implementing integration policies, the European Union plays a key role in helping them as well as their local and regional authorities sustain our citizens. Both at national and local level, there are many specific tools which can empower people with disabilities and their families, such as the European Regional Development Fund, European Social Fund Plus, Erasmus+, InvestEU. Last but not least, the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values program has been recently introduced by the European Commission with the aim to protect and promote rights and values enshrined in the EU Treaties and the Charter of Fundamental Rights by supporting civil society organisations at local, regional, national and transnational level. Not to forget is the UN Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities, which provides that "in order to allow people with disabilities to live independently and to participate fully in all aspects of life, States parties take appropriate measures to ensure those persons, on an equal basis with others, access to information and communications, including technologies and systems, both in urban and rural areas".

Concerning people with reading difficulties, today, at least 7-million people within our borders still suffer from marginalisation because of reasons that relate to their mental and physical health, social condition, and the limits and possibilities of schooling. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many of these people have suffered because of a lack of information from their governments. In the words of László Bercse, the chair of the steering group of the *European Platform of Self-Advocates* and vice-president of *Inclusion Europe*, "the pandemic

did not bring up new issues. It has just made the existing barriers more visible. It was difficult to get accessible information about the dangers of the virus and ways of protection." That is why we need to push forward the inclusion process, starting from accessibility to books and documents, which constitutes the first step towards a more inclusive and equal society. Overall, translating all types of texts – informative texts, expressive texts, operative texts – into Easy-to-Read language allows all these millions of people to understand what they read in all aspects of our society. This will not just be beneficial for people with intellectual disabilities, but also for many other people who live within our borders but not necessarily understand what is written or spoken in a language they do not master (e.g., migrants), and for this very purpose it was established the asylum, migration, and integration fund.

To conclude, writing texts in an Easy-to-Read language is a moral duty. However, it is also important that the effectiveness of these texts is checked by a validation team that makes sure that all the guidelines of writing or translating in Easy-to-Read are followed thus producing a text that is easy to understand. That is what the Train2Validate Erasmus+ project deals with and this book is an overview of the current situation of validation in Europe, a much-needed aspect of our society. Let me also thank my dear friend Carlo Eugeni as well as all the authors of this book, who collaborated in bringing this issue to our attention at all levels, both national and European. Many thanks for involving me in this project. I hope all the best for the Erasmus+ project Train2Validate.

Ad Maiora!

Brussels, 10 January 2022

*Fabio Massimo Castaldo*
*Vice-President of the European Parliament*

# INTRODUCTION

Train2Validate is the short name of the European project "Professional training for easy-to-read facilitators and validators". As an Erasmus+ strategic partnership, the project promotes the cooperation among organisations and the development, transfer and/or implementation of innovative practices at organisational, local, regional, national or European levels. Coordinated by Plena Inclusión Madrid, the project reunites three non-profit organizations (Plena Inclusión Madrid, Spain; Fundatia Professional, Romania; Zavod RISA, Slovenia), three universities (Politehnica University, Timișoara, Romania; Internationale Hochschule SDI München, Germany; Scuola Superiore per Mediatori Linguistici, Italy) and a company specialised in training certification (ECQA GMBH, Austria).

The main aim of Train2Validate is to create certificate studies for easy-to-read (E2R) validators and facilitators. To meet this aim, each partner coordinates on a rotation basis specific intellectual outputs (IOs) which will result in the production of a study on the current background and status of training programs for E2R validators and facilitators in Europe, a set of skills needed to rofessionalize their activities, the curriculum needed for their professional development, the resources (materials and methods) necessary for their training, and last but not least, a possible certification of these courses required to obtain an official qualification.

The Intellectual Output 1 (IO1), coordinated by Politehnica University, Timișoara, Romania, aimed at understanding more about the status and training needs of E2R validators and facilitators across Europe. To meet this aim, the project members undertook a series of steps, including setting up a database of E2R procurers, creating a repository with specialized literature in the field, creating and distributing an online multilingual survey, and ultimately, gathering, compiling and interpreting the survey results at national and European levels.

Published originally as a report (Dejica, Șimon, Fărcașiu and Kilyeni 2021) the current book, edited by Daniel Dejica, Oscar García Muñoz, Simona Șimon, Marcela Fărcașiu and Anamaria Kilyeni, gathers the contributions of all project members and presents in depth the steps taken in IO1 to understand the status of E2R validators and facilitators in Europe and identify their training needs. The book follows a linear and coherent structure, which aims at introducing the readers to the Train2Validate project, explaining the research methodology, illustrating the results obtained by each project partner in Germany, Italy, Romania, Slovenia and Spain, and last but not least, offering a holistic presentation and interpretation of the results, relevant at European level.

In the first chapter of the book, *Shaping the Future of E2R Validators and Facilitators*, Óscar GARCÍA MUÑOZ (2022) introduces the concept of easy-to-read (E2R) and the two new professions of E2R validators and facilitators, justifies the necessity of the Train2Validate project and details its foundations, introduces the project members and presents the expected results of all the intellectual outputs of the project. Chapter 2, *Developing a Working Methodology for Surveying Validators and Facilitators in Europe*

(Dejica, Șimon, Fărcașiu, Kilyeni and 2022a) presents the methodology and workflow used to gather information on the status of training programs for E2R validators and facilitators in Europe. The next five chapters mirror the status of training programs for E2R validators and facilitators in Germany (Bernabé Caro and Cavallo 2022), Italy (Bleve, Eugeni and Sciumbata 2022), Romania (Dejica, Șimon, Fărcașiu and Kilyeni 2022b) Slovenia (Knapp 2022) and Spain (García Muñoz and Bernabé Caro 2022). Each chapter is valuable, as besides offering a clear image of the status of validators and facilitators in individual countries, may be used as a foundation for future research projects. An additional chapter is included for the presentation of the results of the English language survey (Cotoară 2022). In the last chapter of the book, the authors (Dejica, Șimon, Fărcașiu and Kilyeni 2022c) make an overall presentation and analysis of the results. The results are valuable in that they reflect the image of the background of validators and facilitators in Europe, and at the same time, they offer a sound basis for the development of skills and knowledge needed for the professionalization of E2R validators and facilitators.

We believe that the results the project partners obtained and presented in this book are rich, diversified, realistic, and representative for a widespread geographical area in Europe, and will offer a solid ground for the successful advancement of the next activities of the project, namely to identify and document the skills and competencies needed by validators and facilitators (IO2), to develop a competence-based curricula (IO3), to create open educational resources (IO3), to provide assessed training materials (IO4), and to explore certification pathways (IO6). We also believe that the secondary results obtained in IO1 – the creation of a database with specialised literature in the field, the creation of a network of specialists (writers, publishing houses, NGOs or organisations that publish E2R content), the participation in conferences and the massive presence of the TRAIN2VALIDATE project in the press and on social platforms through specific PR and communication activities – combined with a continuing successful cooperation between the project partners, will also facilitate the development of the future IOs of the project, and contribute to the completion of the general aim of the project, namely, to create a common European framework for the validation of E2R content. Last but not least, we hope that with the production of this book, the Train2Validate partners are one step closer to achieving the great vision of a *European Inclusive Society* – to make information easier to read and understand for all of us, including those with reading and understanding difficulties – and at the same, we are an excellent example of successful cooperation and good practice for Erasmus+ strategic partnerships.

Timișoara and Madrid, 10 January 2022

*Daniel Dejica, Oscar García Muñoz, Simona Șimon, Marcela Fărcașiu and Anamaria Kilyeni, editors*

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**Webography**

Easy-to-read survey for facilitators and validators
https://plenainclusionmadrid.org/train2validate/survey/
Erasmus+ EU programme for education, training, youth and sport
https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/opportunities/organisations/cooperation-among-organisations-and-institutions
Erasmus+ EU programme guide
https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/programme-guide/introduction
Train2Validate homepage, "Professional training for easy-to-read facilitators and validators"
https://plenainclusionmadrid.org/train2validate/
Train2Validate project description and aims
https://plenainclusionmadrid.org/train2validate/project/
Train2Validate project partners
https://plenainclusionmadrid.org/train2validate/partners/

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EASIT- Easy Access for Social Inclusion Training (Erasmus+) and MyPart - Participatory Approaches in the Civic Education with and for People with Intellectual Disabilities (Erasmus+). Knapp specializes in researching and teaching Easy-to-Read Language (Easy Slovene), counselling and advocacy. She is a co-founder of Zavod RISA and co-founder of Slovene Association for Adapted Communication LABRA.

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## 1. Shaping the future of E2R validators and facilitators

Óscar GARCÍA MUÑOZ

### 1.1. Introduction

Easy-to-read (E2R), as a writing methodology for covering the needs of people with reading difficulties, has existed for 60 years, when the first publication was launched in Sweden (UNE 2018, 4). However, E2R has experienced both trends of formalisation and standardisation only in the last years, as this article will explain. These trends have focused in the creation of professional roles and the consolidation of a production process and guidelines to apply in the E2R documents and their design, respectively. The European Erasmus+ project 'Professional training for easy-to-read facilitators and validators' (2020-1-ES01-KA203-08206), under the acronym of Train2Validate, has taken into account these trends to propose a solution for these brand-new professions that are part of the E2R methodology. This article will explain the precedents of this project that are the basis of its development, and the expected results that will contribute to the professionalisation of this industry.

### 1.2. The precedents of the Train2Validate project

The European Erasmus+ project 'Professional training for easy-to-read facilitators and validators', under the acronym of Train2Validate, originates from the development of E2R as an inclusive writing methodology that enables people with cognitive needs to access information. End-users under these cognitive needs are people with intellectual disabilities, immigrants with low skills in the language of the host country, people with dyslexia, elderly, low literacy adults or deaf people.

The European projects Pathways I and II are one main precedent. They aimed the use of E2R for long-life learning[1] and highlighted the need of creating a structure to produce documents under these guidelines. These projects concluded with four publications. The first one was *Information for all European standards for making information easy to read and understand*[2], which listed the writing and layout guidelines for easy-to-read texts. The second was *Do not write for us without us*[3], which explained how to involve people with intellectual disabilities in the production of easy-to-read texts. The third one was *Teaching can be easy* [4], which proposed recommendations for lifelong learning staff to make their courses

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[1] Inclusion Europe, https://www.inclusion-europe.eu/pathways-2/
[2] Inclusion Europe, https://sid-inico.usal.es/idocs/F8/FDO23131/Information_for_all.pdf
[3] Inclusion Europe, https://sid.usal.es/idocs/F8/FDO23139/write_for_us.pdf
[4] Inclusion Europe, https://www.globaldisabilityrightsnow.org/sites/default/files/related-files/374/EN_Teaching_can_be_easy.pdf

accessible. The last one was *Training lifelong learning staff*[5],which developed some guidelines on how to train people to write easy-to-read documents. Finally, the project also produced a check list for easy-to-read texts (Inclusion Europe, n.d.-a) and a logo (Inclusion Europe, n.d.-c) to identify the documents published under these guidelines. This project considered from the beginning the role of people with intellectual disabilities to test the comprehensibility of easy-to-read documents (Inclusion Europe, n.d.-d, 6).

Other significant precedents for the Train2Validate project are the Spanish standard *UNE 153101 EX Easy to read. Guidelines and recommendations for the elaboration of documents*[6] and the European project Easy Access for Social Inclusion Training (EASIT). The Spanish standard for E2R is the first worldwide in this field (Delgado and Rodríguez 2018). It provided a systematisation of the definitions for the main concepts about E2R, the production process and the writing and layout guidelines. The definition of easy to read in the Spanish standard defined easy is a 'method that collects a set of guidelines and recommendations related to text composition, design and layout of documents and the assessment of their understandability, targeted to make information accessible for people with reading difficulties' (UNE 2018, 7). This definition included the assessment of the understandability as a compulsory step, so that E2R documents can be considered as such kind of texts. It also added a specific chapter about the validation as a second phase in the E2R production, which is the name under the different testing strategies of E2R documents with people with reading difficulties are covered. In the case of the EASIT project, it finished in August 2021 after three years in which it has produced the skills cards, curricula and teaching materials for E2R writers in audiodescription, subtitling and media journalism. There are some other examples of European projects that aimed the creation of new professions around accessibility, i.e. LTA (Live Text Access) for respeakers and velotypists for subtitling, ADLAB PRO (Audio Description: A Laboratory for the Development of a New Professional Profile) for audiodescribers, and ILSA (Interlingual Live Subtitling for Access) for live subtitlers.

All these precedents created a basis on which the European project Train2Validate made sense. On the one hand, it follows the pathway that opened the starting standardisation of E2R. After the publication of the Spanish standards, the international standard *ISO/IEC CD 23859-1 Information technology — User interfaces — Part 1: Guidance on making written text easy to read and easy to understand* (under development)[7] includes in the last drafts the evaluation of documents with users (ISO 2020, 8-10). Additionally, the German standard body DIN is also developing an easy language standard (DIN SPEC 33429 Empfehlungen für Deutsche Leichte Sprache)[8]. The standardisation will ask for a professionalisation, because these standards provide definitions about the roles in the production process. The Spanish standard defines the roles of facilitators and validators. The facilitator is the 'person that manages the validation phase' and the validator is the 'end-user with reading comprehension difficulties that participates in the validation phase, who can read and has communication skills' (UNE 2018, 6-7). On the other hand, it joins the current

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[5] Inclusion Europe, https://inclusionireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/trainingstaff.pdf
[6] UNE, https://www.une.org/encuentra-tu-norma/busca-tu-norma/norma?c=N0060036
[7] ISO, https://www.iso.org/standard/77178.html
[8] DIN, https://www.din.de/de/wdc-beuth:din21:321488494/pdf-3151389

wave of creation of new professions in the field of accessibility. The added value in the Train2Validate project is the inclusion, because one of those new professions, the validator, has to be carried out by people with reading difficulties. This creates an opportunity for a profile that can have more barriers to access an employment.

### 1.3. Train2Validate, a project to build a certified training for validators and facilitators

The main goal of the Train2Validate project is the creation of the specific professional profiles of validators and facilitators with a certified training for the production of easy-to-read materials. The European projects Pathways I and II pointed out the need of taking into account end-users as testers (Inclusion Europe, n.d.-b, 8) and squeezed the role of the facilitator. In the case of the Spanish standard for E2R, it mentioned both roles but without specifications about their competences. Only in the case of validators, it highlighted reading and communication skills as a condition (UNE 2018, 7).

Train2Validate attempts to bridge the gap of professionalisation in E2R creating skills cards for both roles (validators and facilitators), a curriculum and teaching materials. However, the project confronted a lack of specialised literature and a common framework in order to consider what a facilitator and a validator mean in different countries and what kind of training were carried out by now. That is why the project builds a process where all outputs are based on the precedent work. The first expected result is the identification of training best practices as the first step towards a common European framework for validation of E2R contents. The innovation of the first intellectual output of the project (IO1) lies in the fact that it will be the first shared description of cross-national strategies and methodologies concerning the validation and facilitation of E2R texts. This approach will enrich the final result and will make it more transferable. For this purpose, the partners of the project, led by the Universitatea Politehnica Timisoara, conducted a survey in which 350 people from 12 countries took part (Dejica et al. 2022a). The content of the survey focused on the training and professional experience as validators and facilitators and the expected training that they should receive. Invited participants were not only people that currently perform these jobs, but also E2R writers, publishing houses, organisations that publish E2R materials, scholars and researchers. This book contains the individual research results of each country where the survey was conducted, i.e., Germany (Bernabé Caro and Cavallo 2022), Italy (Bleve, Eugeni and Sciumbata 2022), Slovenia (Knapp 2022), Spain (García Muñoz and Bernabé Caro 2022) and English (Cotoară 2022).

The comparative data gathered in the survey (Dejica et al. 2021; Dejica et al. 2022b) were the basis to start to build the skills cards for both positions. Skills cards are descriptions of the knowledge, skills and competences that a professional should possess. As a qualification tool, skills cards map the competence areas related to a professional profile and draw upon the principle of learning outcomes to describe "what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process", as defined in the European Qualifications Framework (Cedefop 2014, 170). The collected evidences in the survey supported the proposals that partners also complemented with two activities: a comparative work with other professions related to accessibility that have already skills cards and the interview to facilitators and validators to extract the skills they perceive for their

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jobs. This second intellectual output (IO2) will be innovative, as it shapes two professional profiles in the field of inclusion that are very specialised and still not recognised. Furthermore, it tackles the need for a clear definition of the skills linked to the profiles, which is a pre-requisite to developing any curriculum and the associated training materials. The expected impact is high because there are no similar descriptions for these professionals.

After the creation of the skills cards, the next step is the proposal of curricula for each profession in order to create a training course that responds the market and interested students needs with the expectation that can be transferred to universities or to in-house training by E2R procurers. These curricula will have a modular structure with a quantification of ETCS/ECTVS credits to provide clear guidelines about the workload and required dedication by the students. This third intellectual output (IO3) will take into consideration a universal design perspective and the challenge of an inclusive teaching, because the students that will be trained for the validators' curriculum will be people with reading and/or learning difficulties. For this purpose, the curriculum will include a description of the teaching materials and strategies, especially for validators.

The next step in the project is the production of the teaching materials for both curricula. They will have different formats (PDF, video) as open educational resources that will be uploaded in a web platform and in the Youtube project channel. The aim of this fourth intellectual output (IO4) is the social promotion and the educational inclusion. Educational centres will be able to include materials in existing courses and/or develop specific ones that enable participation of people with reading and/or learning difficulties. Furthermore, partners will contact open learning platforms to disseminate them successfully, sustainably, and to allow for self-learning (i.e. Coursera, MiriadaX, Moodle platforms at the partner universities and associations). The output will include not only the training materials, but also supporting materials for trainers. Each module will have a Trainer´s Guide explaining how to use the materials to achieve the learning outcomes. All Trainer´s Guides will describe the training materials, propose activities and provide complementary resources and readings. The Trainer´s Guides for validators' training will also describe teaching strategies for persons with reading disabilities. Additionally, they will be originally created in English and translated into the local languages of the partnership (German, Italian, Romanian, Slovenian and Spanish). In the case of the materials for facilitators, they will be created only in English.

Consistently with the idea of testing that the E2R methodology includes, the project has the fifth intellectual output (IO5) specifically dedicated to the evaluation and assessment. This part will cover three aspects: the course design, globally speaking, to check the overall usability of the material, its organization, usefulness, ability to meet the users' expectations and balance between theoretical background and hands-on activities; the effectiveness of the training materials and methods so as to obtain appropriate guidelines for trainers teaching these courses; and the validation of the training materials by prospective trainees with reading disabilities. All these tasks will be carried out though a Moodle platform designed for this purpose and the creation of different tools, such as questionnaires, so that the results of the testing and the proposals of changes can be implemented immediately. The created pilot course will provide feedback related to estimated times and duration of the modules and the workload to fine-tuning of the final design. Participants will be prospective trainees and trainers.

Finally, the project will prospect the certification chances of the training courses promoted by Train2Validate. In this case, the certification will be carried out in two different ways: firstly, the skills cards, the curriculum and the training materials will comply the expectations of a certification; and secondly, the partnership will explore certification solutions that can be implemented in the future, either at national or at a European stage. For that purpose, the consortium will apply the criteria designed by the European Certification and Quality Association (ECQA). As a result, this intellectual output (IO6) will publish a report about the implementation of a certified training for validators and facilitators.

## 1.4. The partnership and the dissemination of the project

The Train2Validate project is developed by a consortium made up by seven organisations: three NGOs, three universities and a certification organisation. The NGOs are Fundatia Professional (Romania), Plena Inclusión Madrid (Spain) and Zavod RISA (Slovenia). The universities are Scuola Superiore Per Mediatori Linguistici (Italy), Sprachen und Dolmetscher Institut München EV (Germany) and Universitatea Politehnica Timisoara (Romania). The certification organisation is ECQA (Austria). The leader of the project is Plena Inclusión Madrid, that has been leading a service for producing and publishing E2R documents as a tool for inclusion for people with intellectual disabilities since 2016. From this point of view, the partnership joins the experience of universities, NGOs that work with end-users and certification organisations and shows the cooperation that can be established among different organisational structures and cultures to achieve a specific aim that joins inclusion and training.

The project began in September 2020 and will last until August 2023. In this period, the partners of Train2Validate will organise five multiplier events for the dissemination of the results of the project. The first multiplier event was online and organised by Universitatea Politehnica Timisoara in May 2021. In the event, partners have presented the results of the first intellectual output. The second one will be organised by Plena Inclusión Madrid. It is expected to be face-to-face in Madrid to present the skills cards for validators and facilitators in October 2021. Next multiplier events are expected in March 2022 in Italy, November 2022 in Germany and June 2023 in Slovenia. To strengthen the dissemination of the results, the project has created a website (www.train2validate.org) and accounts in the main social networks (Twitter, Facebook, Linkedin, Youtube). Additionally, Train2Validate is in contact with a network of associated partners that have supported the project from the beginning and a network of stakeholders with organisations and institutions that are interested in the results of the project.

## 1.5. Conclusions

The Train2Validate project has five global aims. First of all, the professionalisation of brand-new roles linked to easy-to-read as an inclusive methodology that improves the communication with people with reading difficulties. Secondly, the creation of certified training courses that answer both the market and the end-users needs. Thirdly, an increase in the quality of the E2R publications and a consistency with the existing standards, as the roles that participate in the production process have the right skills for that purpose. Fourth,

a development of a European view around E2R as an inclusive tool and a promoter of a new industry with new professions in which people with reading or learning difficulties find a specialised pathway. Finally, an improvement in the social and sectorial recognition of E2R in two ways: for the roles of facilitator and validator as professional profiles that improve the quality of the final E2R publications and for the documents are validated confronted against the non-validated E2R documents that can appear in the market.

The six intellectual outputs, designed as a chain in which all of them are connected and dependant from the precedent evidences, will provide a methodology to create future professions that can appear in the field of E2R or, globally, in accessibility. Above all, it will be able to have an impact in other professions in which end-users are involved, as it happens with E2R validators. Train2Validate can be seen as a way to create solid evidence-based and innovative professional roles to promote a new way of inclusion in training and employment for people that have more challenges in the current labour market.

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**Webography**

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https://plenainclusionmadrid.org/train2validate/

## 2. Developing a working methodology for surveying validators and facilitators in Europe

Daniel DEJICA, Simona ȘIMON, Marcela FĂRCAȘIU, Annamaria KILYENI

### 2.1. Introduction

The main aim of the Intellectual Output 1 (IO1) of the European Erasmus+ project TRAIN2VALIDATE "Professional training for easy-to-read facilitators and validators" (García Muñoz 2022) was to understand more about the status and needs of easy-to-read (E2R) validators and facilitators across Europe. To meet this aim, we had to develop a working methodology for surveying validators and facilitators in Europe (Dejica et al. 2021). In this chapter, we present the research team, the methodology we created and the workflow we set up for this purpose.

### 2.2. Research team

IO1 was coordinated by a research team from Politehnica University of Timișoara, Romania, which consisted of the following members: Daniel Dejica, Partner leader, IO1 leader, researcher; Șimona Șimon, Local quality manager, researcher; Marcela Fărcașiu, Researcher; Annamaria Kilyeni, Local dissemination manager, researcher, with the continuous support of all project partners, represented by Oscar García Muñoz, Plena Inclusión Madrid, Spain; Rocio Bernabe, Piero Cavallo, Internationale Hochschule SDI München, University of Applied Sciences, Germany; Carlo Eugeni, Francesca Bleve, Scuola Superiore per Mediatori Linguistici, Italy; Angela Cotoară, Fundatia Professional, Romania; Tatjana Knapp, Drago Brumen, Zavod RISA, Center za splosno, funkcionalno in kulturno opismenjevanje, Slovenia; Gabriele Sauberer, ECQA GMBH, Austria.

### 2.3. Research methodology

We conducted our research based on quantitative research methods, as described in the specialized literature (Muijs 2004; O'Leary 2004; Campbell 2014; Creswell 2014; Brezina 2018). Quantitative research "allows data to be collected that focuses on precise and objective measurements that use numerical and statistical analysis to support or refute a hypothesis" (Campbell 2014, 3).

In our study, the quantitative approach was highly useful and valuable because it helped us analyse and examine facts, beliefs, perceptions, opinions, attitudes, and thoughts based on a survey we administered to several hundred participants in Europe. The results of the survey are presented in this book in two ways: first, in individual chapters, each project

partner presents the status of training of validators and facilitators in their respective countries, namely in Germany, Italy, Romania, Slovenia and Spain, based on the survey results they collected at national level. Second, a general presentation and analysis of the results is done based on a compilation of the results gathered from all the surveys, which may be considered representative at the European level. The national and European results are presented separately, in individual chapters in this book.

## 2.4. Research workflow

To collect the data for analysis, we set up a research workflow which consisted of the following stages, described in the next sections:

- Setting up a database of E2R procurers
- Creating a repository with specialized literature in the field
- Creating an online multilingual survey
- Gathering and compiling the survey results

In parallel, we carried out specific communication activities aimed at increasing the visibility of TRAIN2VALIDATE and disseminating our progress related to the various stages of the project, which are also described in the next sections.

### 2.4.1. Setting up a database of E2R procurers

All project partners contributed to the completion of this activity. The database of E2R procurers we set up contains information (official names and contact details) on 148 writers, publishing houses, NGOs or organisations that publish E2R and validation contents in the partner countries (Austria, Germany, Italy, Romania, Slovenia, and Spain). The public version of this database is presented in Annex 1 to this chapter. Besides serving an immediate purpose, namely informing these entities about the existence of the project, and inviting them to take part in the survey, the database is a sustainability tool in itself, and was intended to be used by all partners in the next IOs, to update its constituents on the progress and final results of the project.

### 2.4.2. Disseminating the project

The communication strategy specific to the initial stages of the project aimed at (1) informing the E2R procurers on the existence of the project and of its launch, and (2) increasing the visibility of the project. All partners contributed to the dissemination of the project, through various channels and in different ways, including updating the official website of the project and social media pages, sending Emails to stakeholders, advisory board members, associated partners and E2R procurers, feeding the media with press releases, giving interviews, and making presentations at various events.

The first step to ensure constant project visibility was to create the official project website. The Train2Validate website is available in English as well as in the languages of the five EU partner countries (German, Italian, Romanian, Slovene, Spanish), and is updated regularly with relevant information and news about the project. Most texts are written in E2R language to additionally facilitate access to information for the final beneficiaries of the project. Interested users may also subscribe to the website to receive e-mail updates on latest news, resources, and events. The website had been constantly updated; for instance,

in the first six months of the project, the website was updated 30 times. Official social media accounts on Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube had also been set up to increase project visibility, to share relevant project-related content and to exchange messages with those interested. Oscar García Muñoz and Ana Gallardo from Plena Inclusión Madrid – the main project coordinator – were in charge of building the project's official online presence. All the seven institutions and organisations involved in the project as well as the individual project members used social media (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn) to increase awareness of the project and its aims, and to disseminate news, results or calls for events. A selection of tweets and posts is available in Annex 2.

Another dissemination strategy was to send official invitations to anyone who might be interested in the project to become a stakeholder, an associate partner or a member of the Advisory Board, with the primary aim of increasing awareness of the project and fostering collaboration. These letters to potential stakeholders, associated partners and Advisory Board members included an invitation to follow project activities and progress on the official website and social media platforms, to subscribe to the T2V website, to share and disseminate opinions and feedback on specific project-related activities and results and to participate in the multiplier events. The letter templates in English, as created by Plena Inclusion, are presented in Annex 2. All the letters were translated into the five project languages and adapted for dissemination in each participant country.

We have been constantly feeding the media with press releases and interviews. Two press releases concerning the project were sent to various media outlets in the five partner countries, reaching significant media coverage in local, regional and national news sites (we tracked around 50 news articles which featured the project). Plena Inclusión Madrid created the press release templates in English, which were then translated into German, Italian, Romanian, Slovene and Spanish and adapted by each project partner for distribution to the press. The first press release, distributed from November 2020 to January 2021, provided a brief description of the project (i.e., name, aim, funding, partners, time span) and announced the participation of the partner organisation or institution in the project. The second press release, issued in February 2021, focused on the launch of the multilingual survey as part of IO1 and included an invitation to participate in the survey. In Slovenia, there were also two national radio broadcasts about the project on Koroški radio station, each reaching between 5000 and 8000 listeners. The one on February 25 focused on the aim of the project, while the one on March 3, on the launch of the multilingual survey. Additionally, the project was featured in Plena Inclusion's Newsletter no. 136 (on November 30, 2020), reaching 3802 subscribers, as well as in Politehnica University's electronic noticeboard (on February 2, 2021).

Last but not least, project dissemination was also carried out through presentations at various professional, non-academic meetings and events. Oscar García Muñoz from the NGO Plena Inclusión Madrid presented the project to the Plena Inclusion E2R Committee on January 13, 2021, as well as to the NGO's staff, on January 17. On March 24, 2021 he also talked about the project as a guest speaker at an E2R webinar organized by Centro de Desarrollo de Tecnologías de Inclusión (CEDETI), Chile (70 participants). The webinar Webinar Lectura Fácil ¿por qué y para quién? is available on YouTube (107 views, May 01, 2021). On December 12, 2020, Rocío Bernabé from SDI participated in a workshop on media

accessibility and E2R organized by Universidad Católica del Uruguay, where she informed the 20 participants about the launch of the project. Moreover, on February 5, 2021, the Slovene website Dostopno.si published an interview with Tatjana Knapp from Zavod RISA, which focuses on the T2V project.  In November 2020, Tatjana Knapp also participated in an online conference for E2R professionals, where she presented the project to the 230 participants. The conference is available on YouTube (189 views, May 01, 2021).

### 2.4.3. Creating a repository with specialized literature in the field
In parallel, all partners contributed to the creation of a repository with specialized literature in the field. The repository contains easy-to-read and validation resources (methods, processes, training, etc.) and any other materials related to the project, in all the project languages. The repository includes a variety of genres (books, guides, scientific articles, presentations, or reports) and links to similar projects, and is available for review and use by all project members on the project cloud. A selection of some representative titles available in the repository is also included in Annex 3 of this chapter. The repository is a sustainability tool as well, as it was also aimed at serving all partners for the successful completion of other IOs.

### 2.4.4. Creating an online multilingual survey
The creation of the online multilingual survey consisted of the following steps: (1) producing a first draft of the survey in English, (2) offering comments and making suggestions on the first draft, (3) translating the final draft in all the project languages, (4) creating the online version of the survey on the project website.

All project partners contributed to the creation of the first draft of the survey based on their own professional experience, on the analysis of similar surveys in the field, and on the existing literature in the field. All partners made suggestions related to the structure of the survey, its length, and offered full questions and answers to be used in the survey. Based on these suggestions, Politehnica created a first draft of the survey, which was again submitted for review by all partners. The result was the final version of the survey, presented in Annex 3, was then translated by all partners into all project languages (German, Italian, Romanian, Slovenian and Spanish). In creating the online multilingual survey, we chose the class of interdependent translations (Sager 1997) and produced target texts which are identical in form and content.

Next, each partner was responsible with the creation and testing of the online version of the survey in their own languages, using Google Forms. The German version of the survey was created by Sprachen- und Dolmetscherinstitutmunchen EV, Germany; the Italian by Scuola Superiore per Mediatori Linguistici, Italy; the Romanian by Universitatea Politehnica Timisoara; the Slovenian by Zavod RISA, Center za splosno, funkcionalno in kulturno opismenjevanje, Slovenia; and the Spanish by Plena Inclusión Madrid, Spain. The online English version of the survey was created by Fundatia Profesional, Romania. All the multilingual versions of the survey are available on the TRAIN2VALIDATE website. Due to space constraints, for exemplification purposes we include here only the English version (Annex 4).

The links to each individual survey were then sent to Plena Inclusión Madrid and made available on the project website. The homepage of the survey contains a Thank you note to all those who take the survey, highlights the benefits of their contribution to the development of the project and of a European Inclusive Society, and last but not least, offers respondents the choice of taking the survey in any of these languages: English, German, Italian, Romanian, Slovene or Spanish.

### 2.4.5. Description of the survey

The general philosophy in creating the survey was to use as much as possible E2R language, to be as concise as possible so as to minimize the time of completion, but at the same time, to offer enough information and choices to the respondents, so as to get relevant and qualitative answers. This philosophy is consistent with the purpose of the project because it intends to promote the participation of people with reading difficulties and includes all possible accessibility measures to fulfil this expectation.

The final version of the survey, as discussed and agreed upon by all project partners, consists of an introductory part and 5 sections:

- Demographic profile
- General education and training
- Education and training in E2R
- Current activity
- Skills

Each section consists of a series of questions with checkboxes and multiple answers offered. After the last question, each section contains a text box where respondents are given the possibility to provide any other information, if they wish so. At the beginning of each section, we introduced a brief paragraph in which we described the aim of the section and the number of questions asked.

The ***introductory part*** contains the project description, a personal statement, the estimated time of completion, and the contact persons.

The *Homepage* of the survey and the *Project description* section contain both information on the aims and outcomes of the project – a European set of skills for E2R validators and facilitators – and a motivation for respondents to take the survey, namely that their input will contribute to making information easier to read and understand for all of us, including those with reading and understanding difficulties.

In the *Personal statement* section, we offer the full title and the official identification data of the project (TRAIN2VALIDATE "Professional training for easy-to-read facilitators and validators", Erasmus+ KA2 STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP PROJECT 2020-1-ES01-KA203-082068),  explain that the respondents may take the survey on a voluntary basis and that no monetary payment will be offered for their participation, and we reassure them that all responses will remain confidential, that no personal information will appear in public records, and that the project is research-based. Last but not least, the respondents are informed that they may discontinue their participation in the survey at any time, and are given the choice to leave the website, if they do not accept the terms described, or to take the survey, by clicking Next. These measures were taken in order to comply with data protection requirements and ethics in the communication with the participants.

In the next section, *Estimated time of completion*, we informed the respondents that it might take around 15 minutes to complete the survey. 15 minutes represents the average time needed by all project partners to complete the survey in the testing and simulation stage. We have also listed the main five sections of the survey, familiarising thus respondents with its structure, and reassured them that some parts of the survey may be skipped if they are not experts in the field. The information of the length of the survey in minutes and the division of the content in sections is also another accessibility measure because it facilitates the participation of people with intellectual disabilities or other reading difficulties.

Next, each individual survey contains *contact information* for each partner, and respondents are encouraged to ask additional questions on the research if they wish.

Last but not least, in this introductory part of the survey, we reassured all respondents that our research endeavor includes *no judgement, no quality ranking, no criticism or praise of theories, teachers, professionals or training programs* and that we are just trying to establish facts about individual perceptions concerning the professional background and roles of facilitators and validators.

## SECTION 1: DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

The information in this section was intended to help us to understand more about the profile of the respondents and the European dimension of our research. From the very beginning, the respondents were informed that they would be asked 4 questions and that if they wished to provide any other information, they might do so in the text box at the end of this section. The four questions focused on the country in which they lived, their mother tongue, their age and gender.

## SECTION 2: GENERAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

This is the shortest section of the survey, as it consists of only two questions. We wanted to find out the highest level of education of the participants in the survey, and the ways in which they continue to improve their skills.

## SECTION 3: EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN E2R

In this section we wanted to understand more about the respondents' level of knowledge and skills related to easy-to-read (E2R) content. The 10 questions we asked focused on the type of training received (if any), the type of content the respondents are familiar with, the fields in which they had been trained, the E2R activities they are familiar with, the training activities which were most useful to them, the materials they received for training (if any), and the hours of training. At the end of this section, as well, the respondents had the possibility to add any other relevant information in a text box.

## SECTION 4: YOUR CURRENT ACTIVITY

This is the most developed section. It contains a set of 9 questions about the current activity of the respondents, and then it offers them several options: if they are validators, they are invited to continue with section 4.1. (consisting of 9 questions), if they are facilitators, with

section 4.2. (13 questions), and if they are both, they are invited to answer both sections. All in all, section 4 is made up of 31 questions.

In the introductory part to this section, we wanted to find out about the current workplace of the respondents, if they are or collaborate with members of different associations, if they worked in any other profession before becoming E2R experts, the time they work as E2R experts and if they are paid for their activities, and the language in which they work with E2R content. Sections 4.1. and 4.2. of the survey have more or less a similar structure. Some of the questions are identical, and others are tailored to each profession. We wanted to know if the respondents are trained validators / facilitators, the numbers of projects they have been involved in, if they work with large documents, the time they spend in a working day for validation or facilitation activities, and if they use any guidelines.

**SECTION 5: SKILLS**

This section is the last one in the survey and has 10 questions on the skills that validators and facilitators should have. We made it clear from the start that the points of view of the respondents on the skills that should be emphasized in training are highly important, as these will give us relevant information on how to design a course for validators and facilitators. We focused our questions on the areas in which a validator should have good knowledge, the textual properties which validators should focus on during the validation process, the key components of a successful training program for validators and facilitators, the number of hours of such programs, and if they accepted to enrol in such programs if given the possibility, and/or recommend them to others.

We signalled the end of the survey by a *Thank you* note, and we gave respondents the possibility to access the project website by following a hyperlink, in case they wanted to find out more information about TRAIN2VALIDATE.

## 2.4.6. Disseminating the survey

All partners launched the survey in their countries starting with February 3, 2021, which is considered the official date of the survey launch. The dissemination of the survey was done for a period of 6 weeks and ended on March 10, 2021. The dissemination period of the survey coincides with the period in which the multilingual survey was open for completion to all respondents (February 3, 2021 – March 10, 2021). After 6 weeks, on March 10, the survey was closed and the survey links on the project website became inactive.

Our strategy of disseminating the survey consisted in a series of parallel actions, including the following:

- announcing the launch of the survey on the official Train2Validate website, with a call-to-action to complete the survey in the selected language;
- sending a press release about the launch of the survey in all the project countries (the press release was published by around 20 media outlets);
- announcing the launch of the survey on the project partners' social media accounts (Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook), including institutional accounts;
- sending official invitations by email to all the E2R procurers in our database to participate in the survey (159 invitation were sent); Plena Inclusion created a

template in English for the official invitation to the E2R procurers, which was translated into all project languages, and which is exemplified in Annex 5.

## 2.4.7. Gathering and compiling the survey results

On March 10, 2021, at the end of the surveying period, all partners produced interim national reports in their own languages (Google generated files based on the data they collected), which have also been used by them as a basis for the next chapters in this book.

The national reports were next translated into English by all partners, which in some cases proved to be an extremely strenuous activity, given the impressive number of answers received. The translation of the national reports was a precondition for the generation of the final report in English.

The national reports are relevant in that they mirror the status of validators and facilitators in each project country and may be used for qualitative studies, as well. Additionally, we used the English version of the national reports to generate a consolidated report, which mirrors the situation of validators and facilitators in Europe, and on which we based our quantitative analysis presented in the chapter *The status of training programs for E2R validators and facilitators in Europe* of this book.

Table 2.1. provides information on the number of national E2R procurers (117) from our database to which individual invitations to take the survey were sent by email (159), and the number of answers received from each national survey (337).

| Country | Number of E2R procurers available in the database invited to take the survey | Number of invitations sent | Number of surveys completed (Google forms) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **GERMANY** | 10 | 22 | 15 |
| **ITALY** | 12 | 32 | 41 |
| **ROMANIA** | 40 | 40 | 48 |
| **SLOVENIA** | 12 | 25 | 58 |
| **SPAIN** | 43 | 40 | 175 |
| **TOTAL** | **117** | **159** | **337** |

**Table 2.1.** Situation of surveys

## 2.5. Conclusion

The main aim of this chapter was to present the research methodology and workflow we used to gather information on the status of training programs for E2R validators and facilitators in Europe. The successful completion of IO1 was a prerequisite for the development of the next project IOs, presented in the Introduction of this book, and for the completion of the general aim of the project, namely, to create a common European framework for the validation of E2R content.

The results of the surveys are presented in this book in two ways: first, each project partner presents the national survey results in individual chapters. These mirror the status of training programs for E2R validators and facilitators in Germany (Bernabé Caro and Cavallo

2022), Italy (Bleve, Eugeni and Sciumbata 2022), Romania (Dejica et al. 2022a), Slovenia (Knapp 2022) and Spain (García Muñoz and Bernabé Caro 2022). Each chapter is valuable, as besides offering a clear image of the status of validators and facilitators in individual countries, may be used as a foundation for future research projects. An additional chapter is included for the presentation of the results of the English language survey (Cotoară 2022). Second, we present the results of the status of training programs for E2R validators and facilitators based on the collective answers we collected and analysed from all national surveys (Dejica et al. 2022b), which we consider to be representative at European level, and essential for the successful development of the project.

Our journey lasted for six months and was challenging in many ways: first, the field of E2R validation and facilitation is still new and unexplored; second, we lacked sources, as there is little or no literature in the field of E2R validation and facilitation; third, the international dimension of the project and its interpersonal component were also challenging as some of the project members did not have any working history together or any knowledge on how they would interact socially or professionally; fourth, due to the global pandemic situation, there was little or no face-to-face interaction between project members and E2R procurers or between project members themselves (some of the project members have never met face-to-face); last but not least, the technology itself was challenging, as the entire IO and the research workflow had to be done 100% online.

For us, these challenges meant extra motivation, as we knew that the successful completion of the IO1 would contribute to the general aims of the TRAINTOVALIDATE project, namely to *create* new and attractive jobs for people who use E2R or/and have difficulties reading and understanding texts and information, to *support* them in becoming E2R validators and at the same time, support those who are E2R facilitators, and to *contribute* to the great vision of a *European Inclusive Society*, namely to make information easier to read and understand for all of us, including those with reading and understanding difficulties.

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## Webography

Easy-to-read survey for facilitators and validators
https://plenainclusionmadrid.org/train2validate/survey/
Jezik Pride Naproti https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Eu2XBphAOw
Train2Validate project partners https://plenainclusionmadrid.org/train2validate/partners/
Train2Validate project, "Professional training for easy-to-read facilitators and validators"
https://plenainclusionmadrid.org/train2validate/
Webinar Lectura Fácil ¿por qué y para quién? https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rA2_ogWQUtg

**ANNEX 1: Database of procurers**

**ITALY**

1. AITA - Association of Aphasic people
2. ANFASS - Association of people with Dyslexia
3. APIC - Association of Cochlear implant users
4. APRI - Association of Partially sighted people
5. Association of people with Autism
6. City dpt – Immigrants - Centro Interculturale
7. Cultura Accessibile - Lobby of Cultural Accessibility
8. ENS - Association of Deaf people

9. Fondazione Carlo Molo - Association of people with Dyslexia
10. Istituto Sordi Torino - Association of Deaf people
11. Lega del Filo d'oro - Association of Deaf Blind people
12. UICI Torino Piemonte - Association of Blind People

**GERMANY**
1. Capito Mecklenburg-Vorpommern
2. Forschungsstelle Leichte Sprache
3. Hep Hep Hurra e. V.
4. Hessisches Ministerium fúr Soziales und Integration
5. Leben mit Handicaps
6. Lebenshilfe
7. Lebenshilfe Bremen
8. Lebenshilfe Hamburg
9. Mensch zuerst
10. Multisprech
11. Nachrichtenleicht
12. Netzwerk Leichte Sprache
13. Spaß am Lesen Verlag GmbH
14. WDR

**ROMANIA**
1. ANPDCPA - Autoritatea Națională pentru Drepturile Persoanelor cu Dizabilități, Copii și Adopții
2. Asociația Casa Faenza Timișoara
3. Asociația Divers
4. Asociația Down Bucrești
5. Asociația Langdon Down Oltenia Centrul Educațional Teodora (ALDO-CET)
6. Asociația Pro ACT Suport
7. Asociația Română pentru copii dislexici
8. Autoritatea Națională pentru Persoanele cu Dizabilități
9. Casa Corpului Didactic Mureș
10. Centru școlar de educație incluzivă "Christiana" Bocșa
11. Centrul de Consiliere și Sprijin pentru Părinți și Copii - Salvați copiii
12. Centrul de Educație Incluziva "Primavara" Reșița
13. Centrul de Incluziune Socială, Direcția de Asistență Socială a Mun. Timișoara
14. Centrul de Integrare prin Terapie Ocupațională Mediaș
15. Centrul de Resurse și Asistență educațională Speranța, Timișoara
16. Centrul Școlar pentru Educație Incluzivă 1 Târgu Mureș
17. Centrul Școlar pentru Educație Incluzivă 2 Târgu Mureș
18. Centrul Școlar pentru Educație Incluzivă 3 Reghin
19. Centrul Școlar pentru Educație Incluzivă Alexandru Roșca, Lugoj
20. Centrul Școlar pentru Educație Incluzivă Arad
21. Centrul Școlar pentru Educație Incluzivă Baia Mare

22. Centrul Școlar pentru Educație Incluzivă Brașov
23. Centrul Școlar pentru Educație Incluzivă Cluj Napoca
24. Centrul Școlar pentru Educație Incluzivă Constantin Pufan, Timișoara
25. Centrul Școlar pentru Educație Incluzivă Delfinul, Constanța
26. Centrul Școlar pentru Educație Incluzivă Dumitru Ciomăgeau, Timișoara
27. Centrul Școlar pentru Educație Incluzivă Paul Popescu Neveanu, Timișoara
28. Ceva de spus.ro
29. Complexul de servicii pentru copilul cu deficiențe neuropsihiatrice - Sighișoara
30. Direcția Generală de Asistență socială și Protecția Copilului Mureș
31. Federația pentru Accesibilizarea României
32. Fundația Alpha Transilvana
33. Fundația de Abilitare Speranța
34. Fundația HOLT, Mureș
35. Fundația Pentru Voi, Timișoara
36. Inspectoratul General pentru Imigrări
37. Liceul Teoretic Special IRIS, Timișoara
38. SC Policlinica SMF SRL, Reșița
39. Spitalul Județean de Urgență Reșița, Centrul de Sănătate Mintală
40. UNHCR România

**SLOVENIA**
1. Center za usposabljanje, delo in varstvo Črna na Koroškem
2. Center za usposabljanje, delo in varstvo Dobrna
3. Center za usposabljanje, delo in varstvo Dolfke Boštjančič Draga
4. Center za vzgojo, izobraževanje in usposabljanje, Velenje
5. Društvo za prilagojeno obliko komunikacij LABRA
6. III. OŠ Slovenj Gradec
7. Radiotelevizija Slovenija- Služba za dostopnost programov
8. Univerza v Mariboru, Pedagoška fakulteta
9. Varstveno delovni center Murska Sobota
10. Varstveno delovni center Polž
11. Želva
12. Zveza Sožitje- Zveza društev za pomoč osebam z motnjami v duševnem razvoju Slovenije

**SPAIN**
1. (Profesor Alberto Anula)
2. (Profesor Elías Vived)
3. (Profesora Anna Matamala)
4. (Profesora Inmaculada Fajardo)
5. Agencia AMAS
6. Anfas Navarra
7. Asociación Española de Fundaciones Tutelares
8. Asociación Lectura Fácil Aragón

9. Asociación Lectura Fácil Baleares
10. Asociación Lectura Fácil Castilla y León
11. Asociación Lectura Fácil Castilla-La Mancha
12. Asociación Lectura Fácil Cataluña
13. Asociación Lectura Fácil Extremadura
14. Asociación Lectura Fácil Madrid
15. Aspanies Plena Inclusión Melilla
16. Ceapat
17. Dilee Cooperativa
18. Dincat – Plena Inclusión Cataluña
19. Down España
20. Fademga-Plena Inclusión Galicia
21. Fevas-Plena Inclusión Euskadi
22. Fundación Montemadrid
23. Fundación ONCE
24. Irene Vera de la Fuente (freelance)
25. Lectura Fácil Euskadi
26. Plena Inclusión Andalucía
27. Plena Inclusión Aragón
28. Plena Inclusión Asturias
29. Plena Inclusión Baleares
30. Plena Inclusión Canarias
31. Plena Inclusión Cantabria
32. Plena Inclusión Castilla y León
33. Plena Inclusión Castilla-La Mancha
34. Plena Inclusión Ceuta
35. Plena Inclusión Comunidad Valenciana
36. Plena Inclusión España
37. Plena Inclusión Extremadura
38. Plena Inclusión La Rioja
39. Plena Inclusión Madrid
40. Plena Inclusión Región de Murcia
41. Real Patronato sobre Discapacidad
42. Sara Rodríguez Contreras (freelance)
43. Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona
44. Universidad Autónoma de Madrid
45. Universidad de Valencia
46. Universidad de Zaragoza
47. Universidad Pontificia de Comillas – Cátedra Familia y Discapacidad

**OTHER COUNTRIES (AUSTRIA, SWITZERLAND, ETC.)**
1. Amt der Tiroler Landesregierung,  Internet-Seite vom Land Tirol
2. b'kom Barrierefreie Kommunikation
3. Boarve

4. Boarve konsult
5. Capito Austria
6. Change People
7. Digitale Bibliothek des Fördervereins bidok Österreich / Netzwerk für Inklusion; bidok - behinderung inklusion dokumentation
8. Domus Verlag - Einfache Sprache
9. Dyslexiförbundet
10. Eenvoudig Communiciere
11. Federação Nacional de Cooperativas de Solidariedade Social
12. Inclusion Europe
13. KOMPETENZNETZWERK INFORMATIONSTECHNOLOGIE zur Förderung der INTEGRATION von Menschen mit Behinderungen
14. Lebenshilfe Österreich
15. Leichte Sprache Textagentur
16. Mehr Leichte Sprache im ORF-Teletext
17. Mencap
18. Österreichische Sozialversicherung
19. RECHTleicht.at
20. Selkokeskus
21. Společnost pro podporu lidí s mentálním postižením, z. s.
22. Unapei
23. Vieglas Valodas agentura
24. Vilja Förlag
25. Wibs – Wir informieren, beraten und bestimmen selbst

## Annex 2 – Sample letters used to disseminate the project

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**Letter to Stakeholders:**

Dear XXX,

My name is XXX and I am partner of the Train2Validate Erasmus+ Project, the acronym for "Professional training for easy-to-read facilitators and validators". This project aims to create a certified training for these roles (facilitators and validators), which are important for this methodology, because they help check the comprehensibility of the final E2R texts. In our website (www.train2validate.org), you can find all the details about the project, the partners, the expected results and the events. We consider that the project will have a notorious impact in the field of easy-to-read, because it will contribute to consolidate the methodology and open new employment opportunities for people with reading difficulties and intellectual disabilities.

I think that this project will produce interesting news and results for you. That is why I would like to invite you to follow us in different ways:

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- You can join our subscription list to receive updated news:
  https://plenainclusionmadrid.org/train2validate/subscriptions/
- You can add to your favorites our website to learn about our project:
  www.train2validate.org
- You can follow our social networks:
  - Twitter: https://twitter.com/ToValidate
  - Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/groups/train2validate

Additionally, we are going to celebrate our first event to present the initial results on May, 26th. It will be online and we are going to open the registration. We will report you soon about it.
I hope that you will follow us and, of course, share with us your impressions about the project.

Kind regards,

---

**Letter to Associated partners:**
Dear XXXX,

I write this e-mail as a partner of the Train2Validate Erasmus+ Project, the acronym for "Professional training for easy-to-read facilitators and validators". This project aims to create a certified training for these roles (facilitators and validators), which are important for this methodology, because they help check the comprehensibility of the final E2R texts.

I contact you to ask your support as associated partner of this project. If you agree, you can kindly sign the letter expressing your interest in the project and supporting it in the following actions:

- Interest in learning from the project results and their possible application.
- Dissemination of project activities and results to guarantee a wider impact.
- Participation, where possible, in project activities and multiplier events.

We have already launched our dissemination channels, where you can follow our activities and know more about our project:

- Website: www.train2validate.org
- Twitter: https://twitter.com/tovalidate
- Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/groups/train2validate
- Linkedin: coming soon

In the case of you are interested in being our associated partner, we would like to involve you in our project proportionally to your disposal in the following ways:

- You can subscribe to follow our latest news:

https://plenainclusionmadrid.org/train2validate/subscriptions/
- You can join our social networks to follow any update in real time
- You can mention your involvement as associated partner of our project in any communication or event that you consider relevant. Please mention the project as: "Train2Validate, acronym of the Erasmus + project Professional Training for easy-to-read Validators and Facilitators".
- You can ask for our project logo for any dissemination action linked to our project. We can provide with it with a specific disclaimer and rules of use.
- You can participate in our Multiplier Events. Please find more information on: https://plenainclusionmadrid.org/train2validate/events/
- We would like to contact you to support certain dissemination actions.
- We would like also to contact you to obtain your opinion about the results of the project and how you think you can apply them through short surveys.

We will disseminate a Press Release where we will mention all associated partners of the project, as your organisation. Your contribution will be very valuable for the final success of Train2Validate. At the end of the project, we will issue a certificate as associated partner of our project.

We are very grateful for your support. All your comments are always welcome.

Best regards,

---

**Letter to Advisory Board members:**
Dear XXXX,

My name is Óscar García Muñoz and I am the General Project Manager of the Train2Validate Erasmus+ Project, the acronym for "Professional training for easy-to-read facilitators and validators". This project aims to create a certified training for these roles (facilitators and validators), which are important for this methodology, because they help check the comprehensibility of the final E2R texts. I am part of Plena Inclusión Madrid, an organisation that supports the rights of people with intellectual disabilities and we consider that validation is a professional position that can offer new chances for an inclusive employment for this group.

In our project, we have decided to create an Advisory Board with external experts in this field that can assess our results and propose improvements.

My project partner XXX (in copy), from XXXX, has proposed you to be part of this Advisory Board. In an initial contact, XXX has confirmed your disposal to join this Board. In the name of all partners of the project, we are very grateful that you accept this invitation.

The project expects to produce six intellectual outputs and you have been proposed to

assess the intellectual output X, titled XXX. You can find more information in this link: XXX

This intellectual output will be developed from XXX to XXXX, so we will contact you in that term to ask for your advice.

The participation in the Train2Validate Advisory Board is volunteer. That is why your contribution will be appropriate and proportional for your free disposal. To compensate your contribution, we will acknowledge it in the following ways:

1. There will be a specific menu in our website will all members of the Advisory Board. Apart from your full name, position and organisation, we will also include a contact e-mail, a link to any web, to a Linkedin profile, Twitter profile or any other contact detail that you indicate us.
2. We will announce your participation in a Press Release about the members of the Advisory Board.
3. We will mention your participation in the specific intellectual output when we develop it in our social networks.
4. We will invite you to participate in the programmed Multiplier Event where we disseminate the results of the specific intellectual output. More info in this link: XXX
5. We will issue a certificate of participation as a member of the Advisory Board of our project.

We ask you please to fill in the attached file with your details and sign up the GRDP consent form

We will be very pleased if you disseminate our project and the participation in it as a member of the Advisory Board in your social networks, website or events that you consider relevant to mention. These are our main channels:

- Website: http://train2validate.org/
- Twitter: https://twitter.com/ToValidate
- Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/groups/train2validate
- Linkedin: coming soon
- Suscription list: https://plenainclusionmadrid.org/train2validate/subscriptions/

We are sure that your contribution will improve the final results of our project, which is very committed with the social inclusion of people with reading difficulties.

I insist in my gratitude to join this project.

Best regards,

## Annex 3 – Selected bibliography on Translation and E2R (Repository)

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**Annex 4 – Survey**

**HOMEPAGE OF THE SURVEY**
**[a Start page on the project website]**
Thank you for your interest in Easy to Read (E2R), your time and your valuable input! By filling in this survey you are helping create new and attractive jobs for people who are using E2R or/and have difficulties reading and understanding texts and information. You will support them become E2R validators and at the same time, you will support those who are

E2R facilitators. Last but not least, you are contributing to the great vision of a European Inclusive Society: to make information easier to read and understand for all of us, including those with reading and understanding difficulties.

**To continue, please select the language of the survey:**
☐ English    ☐ German    ☐ Italian    ☐ Romanian    ☐ Slovene    ☐ Spanish

**[this is where the Survey starts]:**
**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The TRAIN2VALIDATE Project will analyse and describe the skills and competences of two important job roles: E2R Facilitators and Validators, who assess whether an E2R text is understandable or not.
Even though validators and facilitators work in teams, their job roles are different. E2R validators are people with reading difficulties who read the texts to assess their comprehensibility. E2R facilitators are supporters: they set up the validation team, organise validation sessions, promote participation, and send back feedback to E2R writers.
The outcome of the project will be a European set of skills for E2R validators and facilitators. This will be the basis of future European Certificates for both job roles.
To find out more about the project, please access the project website. (hyperlink)

**PERSONAL STATEMENT**

In completing this questionnaire, I freely and voluntarily consent to be a participant in the research project TRAIN2VALIDATE "Professional training for easy-to-read facilitators and validators", Erasmus+ KA2 STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP PROJECT 2020-1-ES01-KA203-082068 conducted in 2020-2023. I understand I will not receive monetary payment for my participation.

I understand that the purpose of this research is to investigate the professional background and roles of facilitators and validators, that I am providing information on my personal background, and that I am free to discontinue my participation at any time.

I understand that all my responses will be confidential, in the sense that my personal information will not appear in any public records or publications, and that only the project members will have access to these data for research purposes. I also understand that all my personal data will be safe and used in compliance with GDPR.

The data may be used over the next years for dissemination, research or teaching purposes. I further understand that information from all the respondents will be grouped together to provide general information about facilitators and validators, and answers will never be associated with individual participants.

If you accept, please click **Next**.

If you do not accept, please close this window.

**ESTIMATED TIME OF COMPLETION**

The survey has five main sections and should take around 15 minutes to complete. The key sections of this survey are:
- ➢ SECTION 1: DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE
- ➢ SECTION 2: GENERAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING
- ➢ SECTION 3: EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN E2R
- ➢ SECTION 4: CURRENT ACTIVITY
- ➢ SECTION 5: SKILLS

Don't worry if you are not an expert in the field or if you haven't received any training related to E2R. Some parts of the survey may be skipped.

**CONTACT PERSONS**

I have been told that I am free to ask questions concerning the research procedure. I understand that if I requested more information about this research, I could contact any of the following persons:

- [English] Angela Cotoara, Fundatia Professional, Partner leader (email)
- [German] Rocio Bernabe, Sprachen- und Dolmetscherinstitutmunchen EV, Partner leader (email)
- [Italian] Carlo Eugeni, Scuola Superiore per Mediatori Linguistici, Partner leader, (email)
- [Romanian] Daniel Dejica, Universitatea Politehnica Timisoara, Partner leader, (email)
- [Slovene] Tatjana Knapp, Zavod RISA, Center za splosno, funkcionalno in kulturno opismenjevanje, Partner leader, (email)
- [Spanish] Oscar García Muñoz, Plena Inclusión Madrid, General Project Manager, (email)

[there will be only one contact person in each survey, depending on the language; please use the project email account]

**One final word before you start:**

Please note that this research endeavor includes ***no judgement, no quality ranking, no criticism or praise of theories, teachers, professionals or training programs***; we are just trying to establish facts about individual perceptions concerning the professional background and roles of facilitators and validators. Your cooperation would be highly appreciated. Thank you for your time and valuable input!

**SECTION 1: DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE**

The information that you provide to us here will help us to understand more about your profile. It is important for the European dimension of our research. We will ask you 4 questions. If you wish to provide any other information, you may do so in the text box at the end of this section.

1.1. Where do you live?

        ☐ Germany

        ☐ Italy

        ☐ Romania

        ☐ Slovenia

        ☐ Spain

        ☐ Other (please specify): _____

1.2. What is your mother tongue?

        ☐ German

        ☐ Italian

        ☐ Romanian

        ☐ Slovene

        ☐ Spanish

        ☐ Other (please specify): _____

1.3. What is your age?

        ☐ Under 20

        ☐ Between 20 and 30

        ☐ Between 31 and 40

        ☐ Between 41 and 50

        ☐ Between 51and 60

        ☐ 61 or older

1.4 What is your gender?

        ☐ I am a male

        ☐ I am a female

        ☐ Other

        ☐ I prefer not to answer

1.5 If there is anything else you would like to add, please use the box below (Optional):

**SECTION 2: GENERAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

The information in this section will help us to understand more about your education and training, and is needed to meet the needs of our target groups. We will ask you 2 questions. If you wish to provide any other information, you may do so in the text box at the end of this section.

2.1. What is the highest degree or level of education you have completed? If you are currently enrolled, what is your highest degree received?

    ☐ I have completed no formal education
    ☐ I have completed primary education
    ☐ I have completed secondary education
    ☐ I have completed vocational courses
    ☐ I hold an undergraduate academic degree
    ☐ I hold a Master's degree
    ☐ I hold a PhD/doctorate degree
    ☐ Other (please specify): _____
    ☐ I prefer not to answer

2.2. In what ways do you continue to improve your skills? Please select all that apply.

    ☐ I participate in conferences, workshops, etc.
    ☐ I participate in in-house training (conducted at a company/institution, etc.)
    ☐ I do research
    ☐ I read existing literature relevant for my line of work
    ☐ I communicate with other experts
    ☐ I communicate with users
    ☐ I am not doing anything specific to improve my skills
    ☐ Other (please specify): _____

2.3. If there is anything else you would like to add, please use the box below (Optional):

| |
|---|

**SECTION 3: EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN E2R**

The information in this section will help us to understand more about your level of knowledge and skills related to easy-to-read (E2R) content. We will ask you 10 questions. If you wish to provide any other information, you may do so in the text box at the end of this section.

3.1. Have you received training related to E2R?

    ☐ Yes (continue with this section)
    ☐ No (continue with section 4)

3.2. What type of training have you received? Please select all that apply.
- ☐ I have attended workshops
- ☐ I have attended a vocational course
- ☐ I have attended a university course
- ☐ I have done an internship and have worked at a firm/association for a short period
- ☐ I have received in-house training (at my company/institution, etc.)
- ☐ I am a self-taught expert
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

3.3. What type of E2R content are you familiar with? Please select all that apply.
- ☐ printed content
- ☐ digital content
- ☐ audio content
- ☐ audiovisual content (including interpreting)
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

3.4. In what field have you been trained? Please select all that apply.
- ☐ I have received a general training on several fields (please specify): ____
- ☐ I have received a training in a specific field (please specify): _____
- ☐ I have not been trained in E2R content in any specific field

3.5. What are you familiar with? Please select all that apply.
- ☐ Creating/writing of E2R texts
- ☐ Adapting/editing/translating texts into E2R texts
- ☐ Validating E2R texts with end users
- ☐ Proofreading/revising E2R texts
- ☐ Use of dedicated software and hardware
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

3.6. Is there any other field / content you would have liked to be trained in?
- ☐ Yes. Please specify: _____
- ☐ No

3.7. Which of the following training activities have been more useful for you? Please select all that apply.
- ☐ Lectures
- ☐ Practical creation/writing exercises
- ☐ Practical proofreading/revision exercises
- ☐ Practical adaptation/translation exercises
- ☐ Validation/revision/quality control

☐ Class discussion based on errors
☐ Analyzing existing easy-to-read content
☐ Discussing and comparing easy-to-read guidelines
☐ Internship and working with experts
☐ Other (please specify): _____

3.8. Have you received/used any handbooks for training?
☐ Yes. Please specify: _____
☐ No

3.9. Is there anything you feel that you have missed during training?
☐ Yes. Please specify: _____
☐ No

3.10. Overall, for how long have you been trained?
☐ Less than 20 hours
☐ From 20 to 40 hours
☐ From 40 to 60 hours
☐ More than 60 hours

3.11. If there is anything else you would like to add, please use the box below (Optional):

|  |
|---|

**SECTION 4: YOUR CURRENT ACTIVITY**
The information in this section will help us to understand more about your activities related to easy-to-read content. We will ask you 9 questions. If you wish to provide any other information, you may do so in the text box at the end of this section.

4.1. Where do you currently work? Please select all that apply.
☐ At University or in a research institution
☐ In a public institution
☐ In a not-for-profit organization
☐ In a broadcasting company
☐ In/for a translation company
☐ At a publishing house
☐ I am a freelancer
☐ Other (please specify): _____

4.2. Do you collaborate with or are you a member of an association?
☐ Yes (please, specify):
☐ No

4.3. Which associations do you collaborate with / work for on the topic of E2R content?
  ☐ Intellectual Disabilities (please, specify): _____
  ☐ Sensory Disabilities (please, specify): _____
  ☐ Age-related Disabilities (please, specify): _____
  ☐ Reading-related disabilities (please, specify): _____
  ☐ Other (please specify): _____

4.4. If you worked in another profession before you became an expert in easy-to-read content, please tell us which one:
  ☐ I was a journalist or writer
  ☐ I was a teacher
  ☐ I was a researcher
  ☐ I was a social worker
  ☐ I was a translator or audiovisual translator (for example, subtitler, dubbing translator, etc.)
  ☐ I did something else (please specify): _____
  ☐ I did not work in another profession

4.5. How would you define your activity as an expert in easy-to-read content?
  ☐ I work full time
  ☐ I work part time
  ☐ I work as a volunteer

4.6. Are you paid for your E2R work?
  ☐ Yes, it is my main income
  ☐ Yes, but my main income is from other profession (please specify): _____
  ☐ No

4.7. In what language do you work with easy-to-read content?
  Please specify: _____

4.8. How long have you been working with easy-to-read content?
  ☐ Less than 1 year
  ☐ Between 1 and 5 years
  ☐ More than 5 years

4.9. On the average, how many hours per week do you work with E2R content?
  ☐ Less than 1 hour
  ☐ Between 1 and 8 hours
  ☐ More than 8 hours

4.10. If there is anything else you would like to add, please use the box below (Optional):

| |
|---|

If you are a validator, continue with section 4.1.
If you are a facilitator, continue with section 4.2.
If you are both a validator and facilitator, please answer the questions in both sections 4.1. and 4.2.

**SECTION 4.1: YOUR CURRENT ACTIVITY AS A VALIDATOR**
The information in this section will help us to understand more about the ways in which you validate E2R content. We will ask you 9 questions. If you wish to provide any other information, you may do so in the text box at the end of this section.

4.1.1. Are you a trained validator?
        ☐ Yes
        ☐ No

4.1.2. How many validation projects have you worked on?
        ☐ one
        ☐ 1-5
        ☐ 5-10
        ☐ More than 10

4.1.3. When you validate easy-to-read content, do you work alone or in a team?
        ☐ Mainly alone
        ☐ Sometimes alone and sometimes in a team
        ☐ Mainly in a team

4.1.4. If you work in a team, who are the other members of the validation team? Please select all that apply.
        ☐ Other validators
        ☐ Writer
        ☐ Facilitator
        ☐ Other (please specify): _____

4.1.5. How do you prefer to work with large documents (for example, novels)?
        ☐ I prefer not to validate the entire document with end-users of E2R
        ☐ I prefer to work in a team and share the document with one or more validators of my own choosing

☐ I accept to work in a team and share the document with one or more validators, designated by somebody else (for example, by the facilitator, editor, etc.)
☐ None of the above (please specify): _____

4.1.6. How much time does a validation session last in a day?
☐ Less than two hours
☐ Two-three hours
☐ More than three hours

4.1.7. When you validate easy-to-read content, do you usually use existing guidelines?
☐ Always (go to 4.1.8.)
☐ Often (go to 4.1.8.)
☐ Sometimes (go to 4.1.9.)
☐ Rarely (go to 4.1.9.)
☐ Never (go to 4.1.9.)
☐ Comment box: _____

4.1.8. What guidelines do you use exactly? Please specify: _____
☐ European guidelines
☐ National guidelines
☐ Other guidelines (please specify)

4.1.9. Why don't you always use existing guidelines? Please specify: _____

4.1.10. If there is anything else you would like to add, please use the box below (Optional):

|  |
|--|

**SECTION 4.2: YOUR CURRENT ACTIVITY AS A FACILITATOR**

The information in this section will help us to understand more about the ways in which you facilitate the production of E2R content. We will ask you 13 questions. If you wish to provide any other information, you may do so in the text box at the end of this section.

If you do not work as a facilitator, please continue with Section 5.

4.2.1. Are you a trained facilitator?
☐ yes
☐ no

4.2.2. Before working as a facilitator, did you have any other roles related to E2R? Please select all that apply.

  ☐ I worked as a validator
  ☐ I worked as a researcher
  ☐ I worked as a writer
  ☐ I worked as a translator
  ☐ I worked as a trainer
  ☐ I worked as an editor
  ☐ Other (please specify): _____

4.2.3. Are there any other positions that you are currently filling while being a facilitator? Please select all that apply.

  ☐ I review E2R content
  ☐ I produce / write E2R content
  ☐ I translate E2R content
  ☐ I do research
  ☐ I produce / write E2R content
  ☐ I give workshops / lectures on E2R
  ☐ I am an editor
  ☐ Other (please specify): _____

4.2.4. How many validation projects have you facilitated?

  ☐ one
  ☐ 1-5
  ☐ 5-10
  ☐ more than 10

4.2.5. How do you assess the feasibility of a validation project (size of the document, time of delivery, availability and/or number of validators needed to complete the project, etc.)?

  ☐ I assess the feasibility of the validation project based on my own experience
  ☐ I sometimes communicate with a validator before taking a decision
  ☐ I always communicate with a validator before taking a decision
  ☐ I sometimes communicate with another facilitator before taking a decision
  ☐ Other (please specify): _____

4.2.6. Who are the persons involved in the production of E2R content you communicate with in the facilitation process? Please select all that apply.

  ☐ Validators
  ☐ Other facilitators

_____

    ☐ Researchers

    ☐ Writers

    ☐ Editors / publishers

    ☐ People who need and use E2R content

    ☐ Others (please specify): _____

4.2.7. What is the size of the validation team?

    ☐ Two persons or less

    ☐ Two-four persons

    ☐ Five persons or more

4.2.8. Who sets up the validation team for a specific validation project?

    ☐ I do

    ☐ My employer

    ☐ The editor/publisher

    ☐ There is no pre-established validation team

    ☐ Others (please specify): _____

4.2.9. How do you communicate with E2R writers once the validation is completed? Please select all that apply.

    ☐ In writing: I draft a validation report and send it to them by email

    ☐ In writing: I do not draft a report, I send all the comments and amendments as received from the validators

    ☐ By phone: I set up a meeting and personally update the writer

    ☐ Face-to-face: I set up a meeting and personally discuss with the writer the comments of the validator

    ☐ Face-to-face: I facilitate a meeting between the validator and the writer

    ☐ I do not communicate directly with the E2R writers; I send the validation report to the publisher

    ☐ Other (please specify): _____

4.2.10. Do you receive any feedback from E2R writers based on the validation comments?

    ☐ They review the comments and amendments and send me an updated version for validation

    ☐ They review the comments and amendments and do not send me an updated version for validation

    ☐ I do not receive any feedback from writers

    ☐ Other (please specify): _____

4.2.11. In case you receive an updated version of the document, what do you do next?

    ☐ I send it back to the validator for conformity

□ I personally check to see if any changes were made in the document
□ I send it directly to the editor
□ I do not receive an updated version of the document
□ Other (please specify): _____

4.2.12. What tools do you use to organize sessions? Please select all that apply.

□ Traditional work management tools (printed calendars, notebooks, reminders, etc.)
□ Computer-based work management tools (electronic calendars, reminders, etc.)
□ Web-based communication platforms
□ Video-conferencing systems
□ Dedicated software (word editors, etc.)
□ Reference works (traditional and electronic dictionaries, encyclopedias, etc.)
□ Other (please specify): _____

4.2.13. Do you use any facilitation strategies to organize sessions?

□ Please detail: _____

4.2.14. If there is anything else you would like to add, please use the box below (Optional):

## SECTION 5: SKILLS

This section has 10 questions on the skills that validators and facilitators should have. Skills are the ability to do something well.  Your point of view on the skills that you think should be emphasized in training is important. It will give us relevant information of how to design our course.

5.1. To validate good quality easy-to-read content, a validator should have knowledge and skills in the following areas. Please select all that apply.

□ Global Easy-to-read knowledge: history, guidelines, target groups
□ Easy-to-read principles, guidelines, recommendations, and standards
□ Reading skills
□ Vocal and communication skills
□ Active listening skills
□ Writing skills (including punctuation and spelling)
□ Genre knowledge (familiarity with the content and structure of different text types)

☐ Multimodality (including moving images, pictures, tone of voice, noises, background music, etc.)
☐ Computer skills (including dedicated software and new technologies)
☐ Organization and time management skills
☐ Skills for working in teams
☐ Other (please specify): _____

5.2. In the process of validation, a validator should check. Please select all that apply.
☐ If the E2R text is acceptable and informative enough
☐ If the E2R text is grammatically correct, words are properly chosen and spelt, and punctuation is correct
☐ If the E2R text is fluent, well organized and structured
☐ If the E2R text is clear, accurate, natural and consistent
☐ If the E2R text design and layout are correct
☐ If multimodality is well used
☐ Other (please specify): _____

5.3. In the process of validation, a facilitator should… Please select all that apply.
☐ Global Easy-to-read knowledge: history, guidelines, target groups
☐ Basic validation skills and strategies to develop validations
☐ Familiarity with basic communication and mediation principles
☐ Target groups: types of disabilities, needs, perception and cognitive processing
☐ Genre knowledge (familiarity with the content and structure of different text types)
☐ (Media) accessibility (standards, legislation, guidelines, principles and applicable scenarios, technologies, etc.)
☐ Multimodality (including the role of paratextual information)
☐ Computer skills (including dedicated software and new technologies)
☐ Organizational skills, including working in teams
☐ Time management skills
☐ Other (please specify): _____

5.4. In your opinion, what are the key components of a successful training program for validators and facilitators? Please select all that apply.
☐ existence of published guidelines, handbooks, etc.
☐ existence of a basic universally accepted curriculum
☐ existence of diversified materials for applications
☐ existence of experienced validators and facilitators as lecturers
☐ existence of professional trainers
☐ adequate number of hours
☐ existence of multi-level training programs

☐ existence of some sort of recognition (certificate, diploma, etc.)
☐ Other (please specify): _____

5.5. How many hours should a basic training program for validators consist of? (A basic program focuses on general texts, for a wider audience)
☐ less than 20 hours
☐ 20-40 hours
☐ 40-60 hours
☐ Other (please specify): _____

5.6. How many hours should an advanced training program for specialized validators consist of? (An advanced program covers one area of specialization, e.g., for technical validators, legal validators, etc.)
☐ less than 20 hours
☐ 20-40 hours
☐ 40-60 hours
☐ Other (please specify): _____

5.7. How many hours should a training program for facilitators consist of?
☐ less than 20 hours
☐ 20-40 hours
☐ 40-60 hours
☐ Other (please specify): _____

5.8. As a facilitator or validator, do you think you need better skills and knowledge?
☐ yes
☐ no
☐ not sure

5.9. How likely would you enrol in a program to become a certified validator / facilitator?
☐ Very likely
☐ Likely
☐ Not sure
☐ No. Please tell us why not: _____

5.10. How likely would you recommend such a program to your peers?
☐ Very likely
☐ Likely
☐ Not likely
☐ No. Please tell us why not: _____

5.11. If there is anything else you would like to add, please use the box below (Optional):

This is the end of the survey. Thank you very much for your time and input!
To find out more about TRAIN2VALIDATE, please access the project website.

## Annex 5: Invitation letter to take part in the survey

Dear XXX,

I am writing to you as a partner of the European research project TRAIN2VALIDATE, which has the proposal of creating a professional training for easy-to-read facilitators and validators. The project began in 2020 and is expected to finish in 2023.

As you know, validators are people with reading difficulties that check the easy-to-read texts to assess their comprehensibility. Facilitators are the supporters of the validators in their job.

The project aims to create specific skills cards, curricula and open educational resources for both certificate trainings for easy-to-read validators and facilitators. In order to build them, we need to know the current reality for both positions.

For this purpose, we conduct a survey and we would like your validators, facilitators and any person involved in easy-to-read in your organisation to answer it. The survey is anonymous and takes around 15 minutes to fulfil it. Please find the link here: (Link to the web)

The more answers, the better to obtain a more detailed picture of the reality of easy-to-read facilitators and validators. With all data that we collect, we will publish a report that will be presented in an event in May. We are sure that this information will be key to build our professional training, which will benefit the professionalisation of both positions and help people with reading difficulties to a better job inclusion.

We really appreciate your time, your interest and your valuable input!

We look forward to reading your answers in the survey.

Best wishes,

(Your name)

TRAIN2VALIDATE "Professional training for easy-to-read facilitators and validators" is an Erasmus+ KA2 STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP PROJECT with the code 2020-1-ES01-KA203-082068 and conducted in 2020-2023. This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This communication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission or the National Erasmus Office cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

## 3. Highlights of the training for facilitators and validators in Spain

Óscar GARCÍA MUÑOZ
Rocío BERNABÉ CARO

### 3.1. Introduction

Spain has a standard for easy-to-read since April 2018 (UNE 2018) that provides definitions for the main terms related to it as a methodology, a production process and guidelines to apply in publications. This standard UNE 153101 EX defines easy-to-read (in Spanish, 'lectura fácil') as a 'method that collects a set of guidelines and recommendations related to text composition, design and layout of documents and the assessment of their understandability, targeted to make information accessible for people with reading difficulties' (UNE 2018, 8). Moreover, the standard describes the production process in two phases: translation (in Spanish, 'adaptación') and validation (in Spanish, 'validación'). In the translation phase, the professional profiles are the writer, the designer and the layout editor. In the validation phase, the professional profiles are the validator and the facilitator.

Easy-to-read (E2R) exists in Spain since 2003 when the Associació Lectura Fàcil[1] was created in Catalonia. This association originated from a group of professionals linked to the fields of education and libraries, which created an Easy Language committee as part of the (Collegi Oficial de Bibliotecaris-Documentalistes de Catalunya[2] in 2001 (García and Matamala 2021, 494). After this beginning, several associations linked to the ALF were founded in many regions in Spain. Similarly, Plena Inclusión[3] (known as FEAPS until 2015) started publishing E2R content in 2007 (Plena Inclusión, n.d.). Plena Inclusión works with people with intellectual disabilities and joins 17 regional federations in a network of working groups in the fields of E2R and cognitive accessibility. These regional federations have areas dedicated to producing E2R documents, where people with intellectual disabilities work as validators supported by facilitators (Plena Inclusión 2021).

However, after more than 15 years, there is still a lack of training programs to educate prospective professionals linked to the creation of E2R content in Spain, i.e., writers, validators and facilitators (European Commission 2020). In Spain, there are neither an official training nor are these profiles recognized officially. At universities, there are no formal training programs and most courses are vocational ones promoted by the producers of E2R content, such as the regional federations of Full Inclusion or the Associació Lectura Fàcil (García and Matamala 2021, 509-510). The specific steps that have been undertaken in Spain

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[1] Easy Read Association, an association that promotes easy-to-read publications in Catalonia
[2] Official College of Librarians and Documentalists of Catalonia
[3] Full Inclusion association, an organisation that supports people with intellectual disabilities

towards the formalisation of training are two Erasmus+ projects funded by the European Commission. The first one, EASIT, which finished in August 2021, focused on the training for E2R writers in the fields of audiovisual and journalistic content (e.g., subtitlers, audiodescribers and multimedia journalists). The second one, TRAIN2VALIDATE, in progress until August 2023, focuses on training for facilitators and validators, as experts in the comprehension assessment of E2R content (Grupo de Expertos de Lectura Fácil de Plena Inclusión Madrid 2018; Bernabé Caro and García 2020).

TRAIN2VALIDATE aims at creating Europe-wide recognised curricula that can be implemented both in academic and vocational institutions. To fill the gap of empirical evidence in the field, the consortium's efforts focus on using scientific methods to gather current knowledge from validators and facilitators and related experts across Europe, mainly, from the project countries (Austria, Germany, Italy, Slovenia, Spain and Romania). The underlying idea is that the evidence-based curricula will increase their recognition across countries and institutions upon completion of the project (García Muñoz 2022).

A first step was to conduct a survey to collect data about current practises and knowledge about facilitation and validation. The methodological tool chosen was an online survey, which has been described as an effective tool to collect data from distant-located respondents (Wright 2005). The specific details of the methodology are mentioned in chapter 2 (Dejica et al. 2022a). The questionnaire was launched in February 2021 and included 5 sections in which the headings of this chapter are based. A total of 350 respondents participated in the survey, from which 175 were from Spain. This chapter reports on the results of the responses gathered in the Spanish version of the survey. The results from other countries, i.e., Germany (Bernabé Caro and Cavallo 2022), Italy (Bleve, Eugeni and Sciumbata 2022), Romania (Dejica et al. 2022b), Slovenia (Knapp 2022), Spain (García Muñoz and Bernabé Caro 2022) and English (Cotoară 2022), as a holistic analysis of the data (Dejica et al. 2022c) can be checked in other chapters of this book.

## 3.2. Demographic profile of the Spanish respondents

The number of answers in Spanish was 175, from which all respondents were from Spain and one from Argentina. Almost all respondents pointed out that their mother tongue was Spanish, but 10 answers mentioned other languages: 4 for Catalan, 2 for Galician, 2 for Valencian, 2 for Russian and 1 for Polish. Concerning the sex, 114 people (65.1% of the total) were female and 60 were male (34.3%). Only one respondent ticked "I prefer not to answer this question". What refers to the age, the largest group were respondents between 31 and 40 years old (69 answers, 39.4% of the total), followed by the group of 41 to 50 years old (47 answers, 26.8%). The other age ranges were 20 to 30 years old (36 answers, 20.5%), 51 to 60 years old (20 answers, 11.4%), more than 61 years old (2 answers, 1,1%) and less than 20 years old (1 answer, 0.5%).

## 3.3. Education and training of the Spanish respondents

The answers collected show a broad variety of educational backgrounds. While almost half of the respondents (48%) have university degrees (undergraduate, master or PhD), 42% stated to have some type of studies outside the university. Only 10% mentioned that they had not finished their studies, e.g. certain courses of primary or secondary school. Although this

chapter will cross-match some demographic and educational data with the profiles of facilitators and validators, it is possible to state that facilitators hold university degrees, while most validators have finished primary or secondary school.
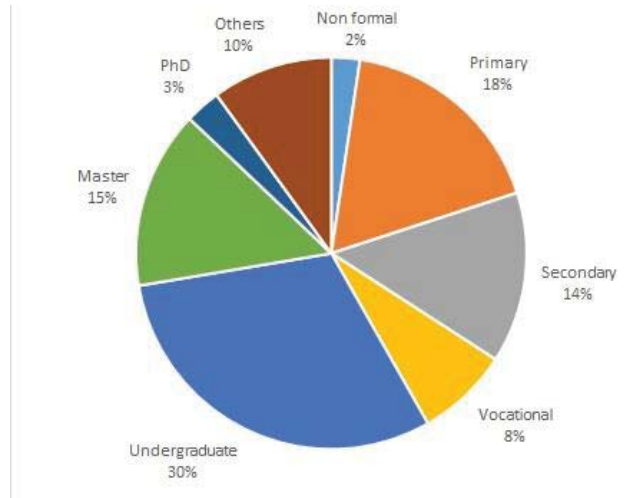


**Figure 3.1.** Proportion of answers to the highest studies finished by the respondents

Some of the questions allowed multiple answers, as in the one about how respondents improve their skills. The following table shows the total of 563 answers collected:

| Activity | Number of answers | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| I participate in conferences, workshops, etc. | 101 | 17.9% |
| I participate in in-house training (conducted at a company/institution, etc.) | 127 | 22.5% |
| I do research | 26 | 4.6% |
| I read existing literature relevant for my line of work | 87 | 15.4% |
| I communicate with other experts | 71 | 12.6% |
| I communicate with users | 116 | 20.6% |
| I am not doing anything specific to improve my skills | 8 | 1.4% |
| Other | 27 | 4.8% |

**Table 3.1.** Answers to the question about the improvement of skills

Specifically, the survey asked for specialised training in easy-to-read. A total of 156 Spanish respondents (89.1%) confirmed that they had received some training in this field. Those who said "yes" were asked about the type of training in a question with multiple answers. Vocational courses and workshops were the most mentioned, although many also

ticked in-house training and self-teaching. University courses were a minority, which indicates that the E2R course offer at a university level is still narrow, as Table 2 shows:

| Type of training | Number of answers | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| I have attended workshops | 91 | 17.9% |
| I have attended a vocational course | 113 | 22.5% |
| I have attended a university course | 10 | 4.6% |
| I have done an internship and have worked at a firm/association for a short period | 36 | 15.4% |
| I have received in-house training (at my company/institution, etc.) | 78 | 12.6% |
| I am a self-taught expert | 41 | 20.6% |
| Other | 15 | 4.8% |

**Table 3.2.** Types of easy-to-read trainings

Concerning the more familiar E2R formats, there is a predominance of printed (145 answers) and digital formats (96 answers), compared to audio (16 answers) and audiovisual ones (30 answers).
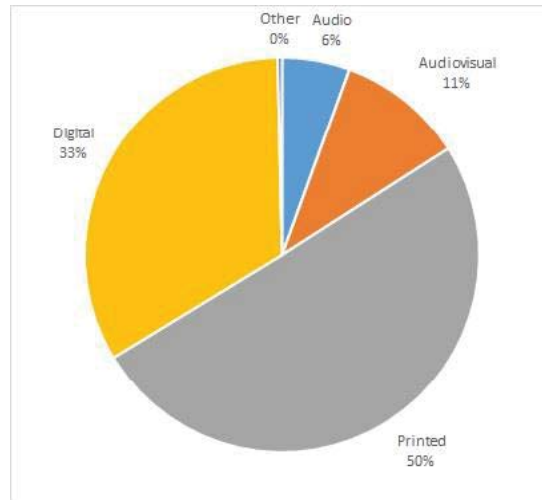


**Figure 3.2.** More familiar easy-to-read formats

Participants in the survey were also asked about the trained topics and the degree of specialisation. Among the 156 respondents that have undergone some kind of training, a majority (90 answers, 57.7%) have received general training on several fields, while 52 (33.3%) mentioned that they had training in a specific field. Only 14 participants (9%) indicated that they have not been trained in E2R content.

What refers to the activities to which respondents are more familiar with, the 389 answers show that the use of dedicated software and hardware is the least frequent one. The other answers show less differences amongst them, as shown in the table:

| E2R activity | Number of answers | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Creating/writing of E2R texts | 73 | 18.7% |
| Adapting/editing/translating texts into E2R texts | 90 | 23.1% |
| Validating E2R texts with end users | 105 | 27.0% |
| Proofreading/revising E2R texts | 88 | 22.6% |
| Use of dedicated software and hardware | 23 | 5.9% |
| Other | 10 | 2.5% |

**Table 3.3.** Types of E2R activities with which respondents are familiar

The next question in the survey asked respondents about other fields or types of content they would like to be trained in. Only 74 (47.4%) out of the 156 persons provided input as free-text answers. These included the activities mentioned in the previous question, for instance, E2R translation, edition, revision, and validation, and other ones, such as specific applications or devices for E2R, in specific kinds of texts, as well as creation of E2R digital content.

The activities that are considered most useful by respondents in easy-to-read training programs are the more practical ones (842 answers). The least useful ones were lectures and the discussion and comparison of easy-to-read guidelines.

| Training activity | Number of answers | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Lectures | 76 | 9.0% |
| Practical creation/writing exercises | 92 | 10.9% |
| Practical proofreading/revision exercises | 106 | 12.6% |
| Practical adaptation/translation exercises | 108 | 12.8% |
| Validation/revision/quality control | 99 | 11.7% |
| Class discussion based on errors | 82 | 9.7% |
| Analysing existing easy-to-read content | 97 | 11.5% |
| Discussing and comparing easy-to-read guidelines | 75 | 8.9% |
| Internship and working with experts | 104 | 12.3% |
| Other | 3 | 0.3% |

**Table 3.4.** More useful easy-to-read activities according to respondents

Another topic linked to the training was the use of handbooks. In this free-text-answer question, only 90 from 156 respondents (57.7%) assured that they received or used any handbook. Some of the most mentioned were the Spanish handbook "Easy read: writing and assessment methods" (in Spanish, "Lectura fácil: métodos de redacción y evaluación"), the easy-to-read guidelines by Plena Inclusion and Inclusion Europe, the guidelines from the

International Federation of Library Institutions Association (IFLA) and the Spanish standard UNE 153101 EX.

The survey also asked respondents about any missing contents in the training that they had received. Only 47 participants out of 175 provided a free-text answer with very different comments, including that they have missed more practice. The table below shows the comprehensive list of answers:

| |
|---|
| About picture testing |
| Adaptations in digital environments |
| Although the Plena Inclusion materials are very completed, I would like that they had more practical examples |
| Certifications |
| Clear up and differentiate in levels the adaptations: more or less adapted |
| Contact with professionals who work with E2R users |
| Contact with the target group, to empathise with it and make the best possible adaptation to their real needs |
| Correction of practical exercises, case study |
| Design and layout |
| For me everything was quite good and very clear |
| Give professional status to the training |
| Guidelines for audiovisual contents |
| Guidelines to follow and recommendations to validate texts |
| I miss precision on the guidelines, too ambiguous |
| I missed more practice |
| I needed more clear guidelines |
| I should have learned more |
| I would like that the training courses would be longer |
| Longer course, more personal work (they were basic and medium, not advance) |
| Many things, because it is the first time I do and I would like to learn more |
| Materials for working |
| More direct contact with the trainer |
| More empiric research about the validity of the guidelines |
| More practical content, more discussions and work with experts |
| More practical exercises |
| More practice |
| More practice |
| More practice and more real cases |
| More practices |
| More practices |
| More practices |
| More practices supervised by an E2R expert |
| More time to train writing |
| More training hours |
| Point out the things so that people that do not understand or come from another country find them easier |
| Practical exercises |
| Precision and certification of the contents |

| |
|---|
| Reference books for validations |
| Scientific verification of the guidelines |
| Specific training and certification |
| The course lasted the same, only 3 days, E2R, the team needs more time for training |
| The training was focused in knowing and applying E2R. However, I think it is necessary a wider training, with crossed contents for E2R, from reading and writing difficulties in each profile to cognitive processes involved in learning |
| There is no standard with enough consensus, I miss a unification of criteria |
| To have the materials used by the trainers |
| Universal accessibility |
| Vocabulary that can be used in E2R |
| Word searching, Easy read dictionary, synonyms, kind or words, syntactic analysis |

**Table 3.5.** Missing contents as perceived by respondents, in alphabetical order

Finally, the last question in this section referred to the training length. The majority of respondents (62 answers) participated in courses of less than 20 hours, followed by 49 answers to a length of 20 to 40 hours. Longer courses were a minority. For instance, only 23 people marked from 40 to 60 hours, and 22 persons, of more than 60 hours.
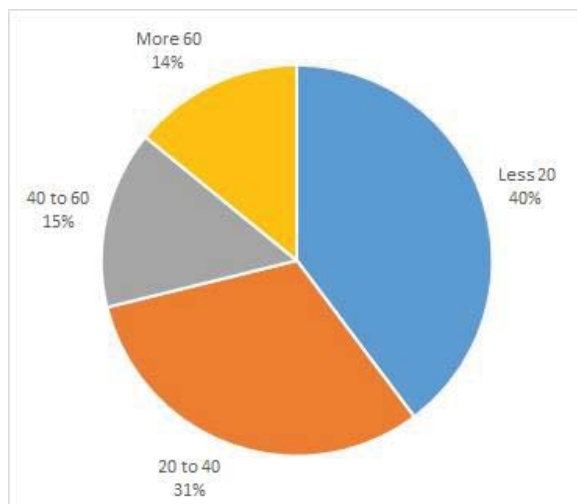


**Figure 3.3.** Training length

## 3.4. The current working activity

Participants were asked about their current positions in a multiple-answer question. Out of the 182 answers, 123 (67.5%) work in a non-profit organisation, 22 people (12.1%) in a centre for independent living, 11 were unemployed (6.0%), 7 work at a university (3.8%), 5 are self-employees and other 5 work in public institutions (2.7% each) and 1 (0.5) in a publishing house. Finally, 8 people have other occupations, such as working at a launderette.

The total number of answers is higher than the number of participants (175), because 6 people marked two different options. None of the participants work as freelancers, translators or in a broadcasting company.

Respondents were also asked about the kind of non-profit organisation with which they work or collaborate in E2R topics. The largest number of respondents (156, or 89.1%) stated that they work or collaborate with organisations of people with intellectual disabilities. Other target groups were a minority, as the table shows:

| Type of association | Number of answers | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Intellectual disabilities | 156 | 89.1% |
| Sensory disabilities | 1 | 0.5% |
| Age-related disabilities | 1 | 0.5% |
| Reading-related disabilities | 5 | 2.8% |
| Others | 2 | 1.1% |
| None | 10 | 5.7% |

**Table 3.6.** Associations with which respondents work or collaborate.

Regarding their working position before becoming an expert in E2R content, 79 participants in the survey (45.1%) had not worked in another profession. The other answers showed a wide range of professional backgrounds, i.e., journalists or writers (13 participants), teachers (12), social workers (6), researchers (4) and translators (2). In the free-text field, 9 people mentioned social professions, such as occupational therapists, pedagogues or psychologists.
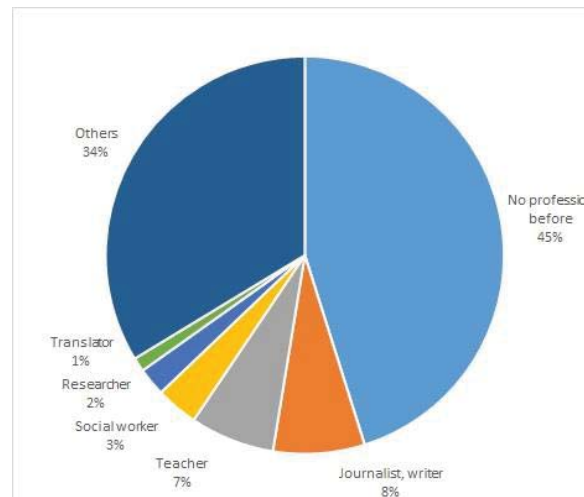


**Figure 3.4.** Former profession before becoming an E2R expert

The following questions were related to the current dedication of the respondents to E2R. According to the working relationship with their organisations, two-thirds of the respondents (67%) work part time, whereas only 8% work full time and 25% work as volunteers:
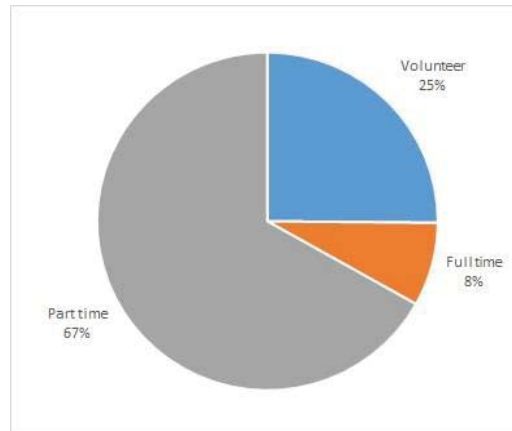


**Figure 3.5.** Working relationship with the organisation

Regarding the question whether they are paid for their work in E2R, most respondents don't receive any payment. Among those who are paid, only 29 stated that it is their main income, and 42 mentioned that their main income is from another profession.
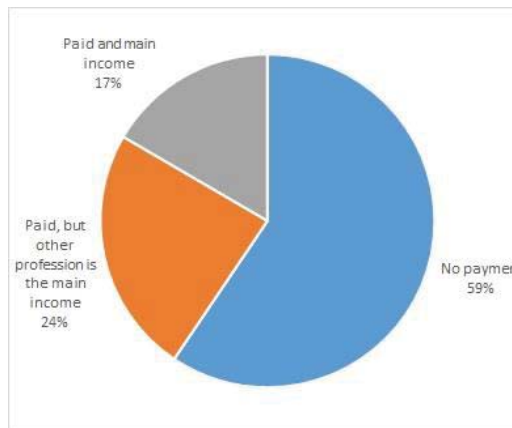


**Figure 3.6.** Incomes from easy-to-read activity

The last questions of this section were about respondents' experience working with E2R content and their weekly dedication. The largest group of respondents (108, or 61.7%)

have been working in the field for 1 to 5 years, and most of them (111, or 63.4%) work between 1 and 8 hours weekly in tasks related to E2R content.
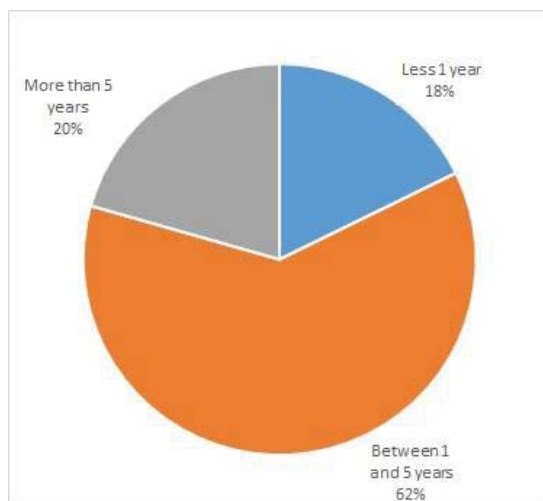


**Figure 3.7.** Experience working with easy-to-read
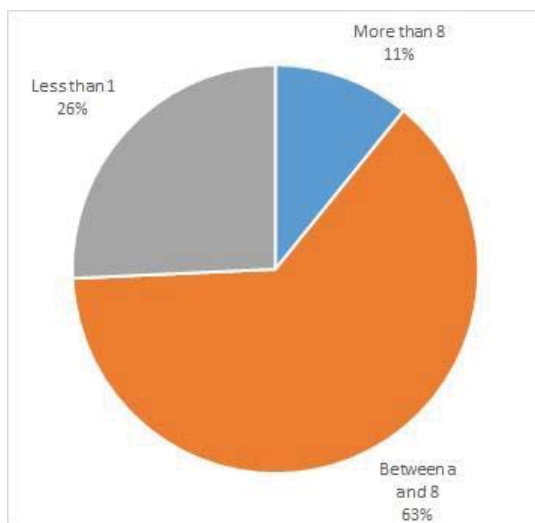


**Figure 3.8.** Weekly dedication in hours

### 3.5. The work as validator
The survey tried to deepen in the specific training and experience of the respondents depending on their position as validator or facilitator. From the 175 participants, 70

respondents (40%) described themselves as validators, 49 as facilitators (28%), 10 as both (5.7%) and 46 as none of them (26.2%).

In the case of the validators, considering those that stated to work only as validators and those having both roles, 39 were men, 40 were women and 1 prefer not to answer the question. As for their age, 21 people are between 20 and 30 years old (26.2%), 32 are between 31 and 40 years old (40%), 20 are between 41 and 50 years old (25%), 2 are between 51 and 60 (2.5%) years old, and another 2 are older than 61 (2.5%). As for their highest studies finished, the distribution showed that the majority attended either primary or secondary school, as the chart below shows:
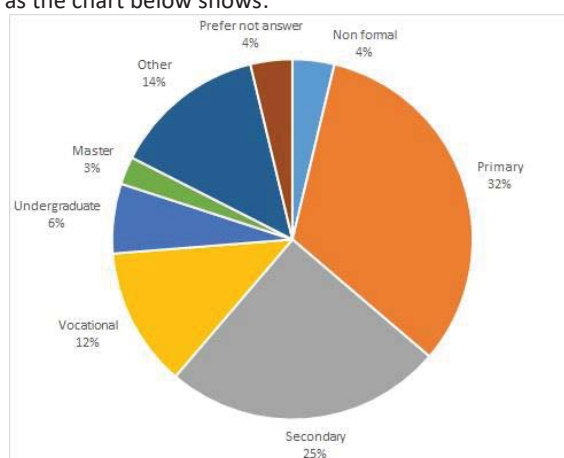


**Figure 3.9.** Highest finished studies among the validators that participated in the survey

The types of E2R training attended by validators are wide-ranging according to the 169 answers, with university courses having the least amount of mentions.

| Type of training | Number of answers | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| I have attended workshops | 38 | 17.9% |
| I have attended a vocational course | 49 | 22.5% |
| I have attended a university course | 7 | 4.6% |
| I have done an internship and have worked at a firm/association for a short period | 24 | 15.4% |
| I have received in-house training (at my company/institution, etc.) | 37 | 12.6% |
| I am a self-taught expert | 10 | 20.6% |
| Other | 4 | 4.8% |

**Table 3.7.** Types of easy-to-read trainings by validators

Only 10 out of the 80 respondents (12.5%) mentioned that they didn't have any training. From the other 71 answers, 31 respondents stated that they took courses of less

than 20 hours (44.2%), 24 people had a 20-40-hour training (33.8%), 10 persons chose the option 40 to 60 hours (14.1%), and 6 persons received training of more than 60 hours (8.4%).

The majority of the validators that participated in the survey stated that they had a long experience (more than 10 validated publications):
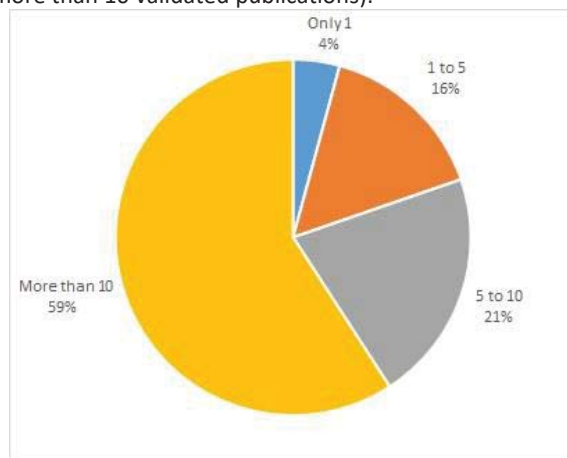


**Figure 3.10.** Number of validated publications

Another group of questions research about the organisation of work. The majority of validators work in groups (65, 81.2%), while the other 15 validators work sometimes in groups and sometimes alone (18.7%). None of them work always alone. The next question was a multi-answered one and concerned the usual types of members in validation teams. From the 146 responses, 71 said that they work with other validators (48.6%), 56 work with a facilitator (38.3%), 16 with the writer (10.5%) and 3 respondents provided other answers (2%). The daily time dedicated to validation sessions is less than 2 hours in 32 cases (40%), between 2 and 3 hours in 42 cases (52.5%) and more than 3 hours in 6 cases (7.5%).

Finally, respondents were surveyed about the use of E2R guidelines in their work. Two thirds (66%) always use existing easy-to-read guidelines when they validate, 21 respondents use them often (26.2%), 4 use them sometimes (5%) and only 1 never use them (1.2%). The applied guidelines are the Spanish ones in 38 cases (47.5%), the European ones in 27 cases (33.7%), both in 13 cases (16.2%), and 2 respondents stated that they don't know which ones they apply. The reasons why validators don't use always existing guidelines were collected in free-text answer are shown in the next table.

| Comments |
|---|
| Ask for support |
| Because almost everyone uses it |
| Because I don't understand them |
| Because I forgot some |
| Because I have doubts |
| Because I have doubts |
| Because I have doubts |

| |
|---|
| Because I have doubts |
| Because I have doubts |
| Because I have doubts |
| Because I like to write with the Spanish guidelines |
| Because it is easier |
| Because it is more comfortable |
| Because it is not needed |
| Because my mates and I discuss about the choice of the words |
| Because sometimes it cannot be changed, we are said it is not possible |
| Because sometimes it is better not applying them |
| Because sometimes it is more understandable not applying the guidelines |
| Because sometimes it is not necessary |
| Because sometimes we have rules that we have to apply and sometimes we don't use them to fit the reading the easiest possible |
| Because sometimes we have to translate technical documents for the population and E2R is devoted to people with comprehension difficulties. For general population we apply other methodology, plain language |
| Because there are exceptions too |
| Because they are guidelines and, when we validate in the team, we discuss and see what we understand all. Sometimes we understand it in other way |
| Because they can seem difficult |
| Because we have experience |
| Guidelines, the better it is, the better in general |
| I don't know |
| I don't know |
| I don't understand the question |
| I have no full training |
| I have no time |
| i try to follow them |
| I use the ones I learned |
| It depends on the difficulty of the text |
| It depends on the facilitator |
| It depends on the group |
| It depends on the guidelines |
| It depends on the text |
| Because it is not possible |
| Sometimes, it is easier to understand the text not following the guidelines |
| We do it so that it is understandable for all |
| We use the ones we know so that the text is understandable |

**Table 3.8.** List of comments about why validators don't always use guidelines in their work, in alphabetical order

## 3.6. The work as facilitator

The total of responses concerning how many respondents work as a facilitator shows diverging numbers in the questionnaire. The question whether a person is a validator, facilitator, both or none revealed that 49 respondents were facilitators and 10 worked in

both positions. However, when participants were asked to answer the specific questions about one of the two job roles, the number of answers was 51. This number is slightly lower than the sum of people who stated that are only facilitators and those who work in both positions, i.e. 59 persons. This divergence may point to a lack of definition of the job roles even among experts in the profession.

Based on the 51 answers, 35 participants in the survey (68,6%) stated that they had received training while 16 persons stated that they had not (31.3%). Concerning their former positions, 8 persons declared that they had no precedent work (15.6%) while 15 respondents had had several positions (29.4%). The total of 78 answers received can be explained with the fact that the question allowed for multiple answers. The proportion of former positions is showed in the next chart:
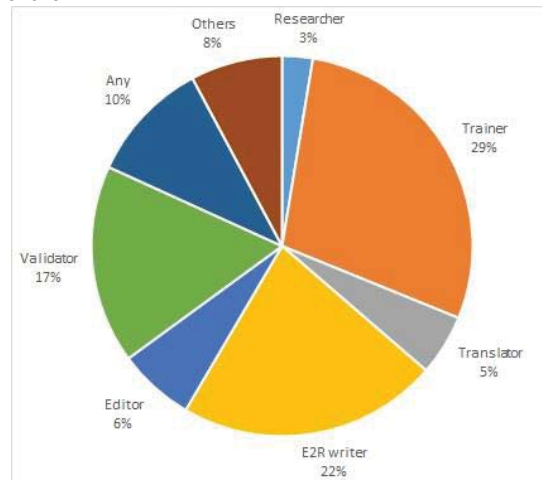


**Figure 3.11.** Former positions of current facilitators

Facilitators were also asked about other types of E2R activities that they also conduct in their jobs. The total of answers was 142, as it was allowed to tick several ones. The majority of respondents also work in the production of texts, either originals or translations, as it is shown in Table 3.8:

| E2R activity | Number of answers | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| I am an editor | 4 | 2.3% |
| I do research | 11 | 6.4% |
| I give workshops / lectures on E2R | 24 | 13.9% |
| I produce / write E2R content | 28 | 16.2% |
| I translate E2R content | 42 | 24.4% |
| I review E2R content | 31 | 18.0% |
| Other | 2 | 1.1% |

**Table 3.9.** Other easy-to-read activities that facilitators develop simultaneously

As for the experience in facilitating validation projects, 21 respondents (41.1%) answered that they had facilitated more than 10 projects, 8 respondents (15.6%) have facilitated between 5 and 10 projects, 15 persons (29.4%) answered between 1 and 5 projects, and 7 respondents (13.7%) stated that they had only worked in 1 project. Respondents also reported on organisational aspects. Regarding the feasibility evaluation of a validation project (i.e., according to the size of the document, deadline, or number of validators), 18 facilitators (35.2%) stated that they sometimes communicate with another facilitator before making a decision, 13 of them (25.5%) assess the feasibility of a validation project based on their own experience, 11 persons (21.5%) always communicate with a validator before making a decision, 4 facilitators (7.8%) stated that they sometimes communicate with a validator before taking a decision and 2 facilitators (3.9%) said that the coordinator makes the decision. Apart from that, 3 people (5.9%) provided other answers. For instance, one facilitator has never worked with trained validators, but validates texts with people from their personal environment (i.e., family, volunteers, other professionals and people with intellectual disabilities); another one assesses the feasibility based on their experience, and the third one did not understand the question.

Asked about the persons involved in the production of E2R content they communicate with in the facilitation process, respondents could tick several answers. From 137 total answers, over 50% of the facilitators work together with validators, i.e., persons with intellectual disabilities, and with other end-users of easy-to-read content:
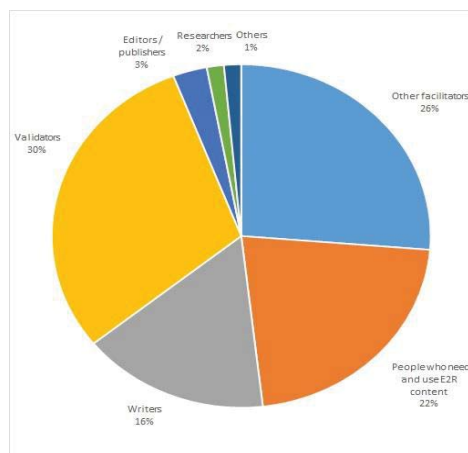


**Figure 3.12.** Persons involved in the production of easy-to-read content the facilitator communicate with

The size of the groups mentioned by respondents ranges from less than 2 validators (4 answers, 7.8%) to groups between 2 and 4 validators (49%) and teams of more than 5 validators (43.1%). The facilitators stated in 30 cases (58.8%) that they set up the teams themselves. Conversely, in 6 cases (11.7%), this task is carried out by the employers; in 5 cases (9.8%), there is no pre-established validation team; and only in 1 case (1.9%), the group

is set up by the editor or publisher. In 9 cases, there are other answers. In two cases, the respondents explained that the groups include validators with different levels of reading comprehension who have undergone training previously. One of the respondents stated that "We choose them according to their availability".

Facilitators were also questioned about their professional relationship and ways to communicate with easy-to-read writers. From the different options, the multiple responses (totally, 80) are as follows:

| Ways of reporting | Number of answers | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| In writing: I draft a validation report and send it to them by email | 20 | 25% |
| In writing: I do not draft a report, I send all the comments and amendments as received from the validators | 13 | 16.2% |
| By phone: I set up a meeting and personally update the writer | 9 | 11.2% |
| Face-to-face: I facilitate a meeting between the validator and the writer | 9 | 11.2% |
| Face-to-face: I set up a meeting and personally discuss with the writer the comments of the validator | 14 | 17.5% |
| I do not communicate directly with the E2R writers; I send the validation report to the publisher | 4 | 5% |
| Other | 11 | 13.7% |

**Table 3.10.** Communication with easy-to-read writers after the validation

After a facilitator sends a validation report or a commented version to an E2R writer, the ways the two professionals interact may vary. According to the answers, 22 facilitators (43.1%) stated that the writers review the comments and amendments and send them an updated version for a second validation. A total of 8 facilitators (15.7%) said that the writers review the comments and amendments and do not send them an updated version for validation, and 14 facilitators (27.4%) ticked that they do not receive any feedback from writers. Additionally, 7 facilitators added these comments.

| Ways facilitators and writers interact |
|---|
| I receive an answer from the manager or other professionals |
| I was never in this situation. I have never managed any job |
| If there are important amendments, we validate only that part. If not, the amendments are included directly |
| If they have a doubt or don't agree the proposals, they contact us or send the texts again for a new validation |
| Sometimes, E2R writers send the updated versions, sometimes not |
| We usually are the E2R writers, we have only few experiences of validations of texts not produced by us |
| We validate only the texts that we create for our own job |

**Table 3.11.** Other answers from facilitators to the question about the feedback from easy-to-read writers after the validation

Finally, when facilitators receive updated versions of the documents, 24 of them (47%) send them back to the validator for conformity, 7 facilitators (13.7%) check personally to see if there are any changes in the document, 1 facilitator (1.9%) sends it directly to the editor, and in 6 cases (11.7%), facilitators provided another answers.

With regards to the tools that the facilitator uses to organise the validation sessions, the array proposed in the survey was wide and provided the following results:

| Tools used in validation | Number of answers | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Traditional work management tools (printed calendars, notebooks, reminders, etc.) | 38 | 26.0% |
| Computer-based work management tools (electronic calendars, reminders, etc.) | 17 | 11.6% |
| Web-based communication platforms | 17 | 11.6% |
| Video-conferencing systems | 24 | 16.4% |
| Dedicated software (word editors, etc.) | 19 | 13.0% |
| Reference works (traditional and electronic dictionaries, encyclopaedias, etc.) | 26 | 17.8% |
| Other | 5 | 3.4% |

**Table 3.12.** Tools used by facilitators to organise validation sessions

The last question in this section concerned kinds of facilitation strategies. From the 51 answers, 13 (25.4%) respondents stated that they do not use any specific strategy or did not mention any. The other 38 answers included discussions, questions, observation of non-verbal communication, reading comprehension, summaries, synonyms or pictograms.

## 3.7. The creation of a training for facilitators and validators

This section of the questionnaire aimed to collect data about elements of prospective training. The survey proposed an extensive list of skills and knowledge that validators should acquire or have. The multiple-answer questions gathered respondents' views. From a total of 1,178 answers, the skills and knowledge that received the highest number of mentions were those related to easy-to-read knowledge and team working skills. Nonetheless, competences related to linguistics also obtained high scores:

| Knowledge and skills: validators | Number of answers | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Global Easy-to-read knowledge: history, guidelines, target groups | 141 | 11.9% |
| Easy-to-read principles, guidelines, recommendations, and standards | 148 | 12.5% |
| Reading skills | 112 | 9.5% |
| Vocal and communication skills | 117 | 9.9% |
| Active listening skills | 138 | 11.7% |
| Writing skills (including punctuation and spelling) | 93 | 7.9% |
| Genre knowledge (familiarity with the content and structure of different text types) | 84 | 7.1% |
| Multimodality (including moving images, pictures, tone of voice, noises, | 56 | 4.7% |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| background music, etc.) | | |
| Computer skills (including dedicated software and new technologies) | 66 | 5.6% |
| Organization and time management skills | 70 | 5.9% |
| Skills for working in teams | 144 | 12.2% |
| Other | 9 | 0.7% |

**Table 3.13.** Knowledge and skills that a validator should have for a good quality of the activity

Another question aimed to identify what textual aspects are checked during validation. From the 754 answers, clarity and fluency were the most ticked items, while grammar, spelling and multimodality received lower mentions:

| What a validator should check | Number of answers | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| If the E2R text is acceptable and informative enough | 130 | 17.2% |
| If the E2R text is grammatically correct, words are properly chosen and spelt, and punctuation is correct | 114 | 15.1% |
| If the E2R text is fluent, well organized and structured | 144 | 19.1% |
| If the E2R text is clear, accurate, natural and consistent | 148 | 19.6% |
| If the E2R text design and layout are correct | 134 | 17.7% |
| If multimodality is well used | 78 | 10.3% |
| Other | 6 | 0.8% |

**Table 3.14.** What should a validator check during a validation?

In the case of facilitators, respondents were asked about the knowledge and skills that are necessary for the job. From the 1,326 answers, E2R knowledge, facilitation strategies and organisational skills were the main ones, although the difference with other topics is narrow:

| Knowledge and skills: facilitators | Number of answers | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Global Easy-to-read knowledge: history, guidelines, target groups | 155 | 11.6% |
| Basic validation skills and strategies to develop validations | 159 | 12.0% |
| Familiarity with basic communication and mediation principles | 125 | 9.4% |
| Target groups: types of disabilities, needs, perception and cognitive processing | 145 | 10.9% |
| Genre knowledge (familiarity with the content and structure of different text types) | 110 | 8.3% |
| (Media) accessibility (standards, legislation, guidelines, principles and applicable scenarios, technologies, etc.) | 113 | 8.5% |
| Multimodality (including the role of paratextual information) | 101 | 7.6% |
| Computer skills (including dedicated software and new technologies) | 130 | 9.8% |
| Organizational skills, including working in teams | 147 | 11.1% |
| Time management skills | 129 | 10.4% |
| Other | 12 | 0.9% |

**Table 3.15.** Knowledge and skills that a facilitator should have for a good quality of the activity

Finally, concerning the key components for a possible training program for facilitators and validators, respondents provided a similar number of answers for all items, with the use of current guidelines and handbooks leading the list. The results from a total of 1,027 answers is the following:

| Key components of a training program | Number of answers | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Existence of published guidelines, handbooks, etc. | 152 | 14,8% |
| Existence of a basic universally accepted curriculum | 100 | 9.7% |
| Existence of diversified materials for applications | 124 | 12.0% |
| Existence of experienced validators and facilitators as lecturers | 136 | 13.2% |
| Existence of professional trainers | 129 | 13.5% |
| Adequate number of hours | 118 | 11.5% |
| Existence of multi-level training programs | 131 | 12.7% |
| Existence of some sort of recognition (certificate, diploma, etc.) | 132 | 12.8% |
| Other | 5 | 0.5% |

**Table 3.16.** Key components selected by the participants for a possible training program for facilitators and validators

The training length was also a question in the survey and concerned the training programs for both, facilitators and validators. In the case of validators, the questions differentiate between basic and advanced level training. The charts shown below reveal that the preferred length for basic training for validators was 20 to 40 hours (90 answers, 51%), while the favoured length for advanced training for validators was between 40 and 60 hours (90 answers, 51%). The answers concerning the training for facilitators were more balanced between the two options 20-40 hours (78 answers, 44%) and 40-60 hours (64 answers, 37%).
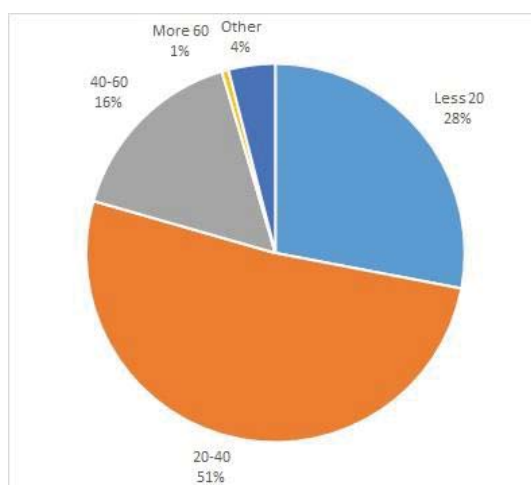


**Figure 3.13.** Length for a basic training for validators
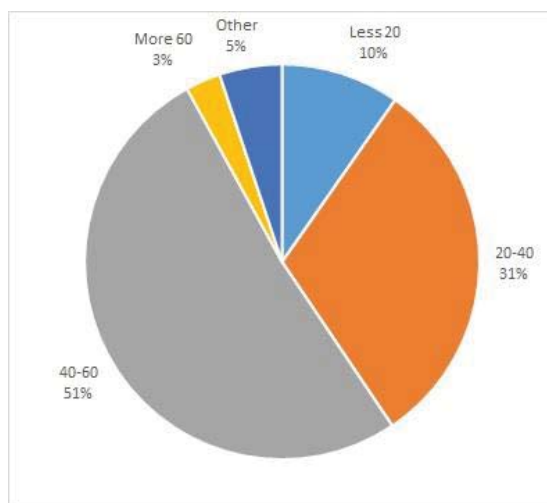
**Figure 3.14.** Length for an advanced training for validators
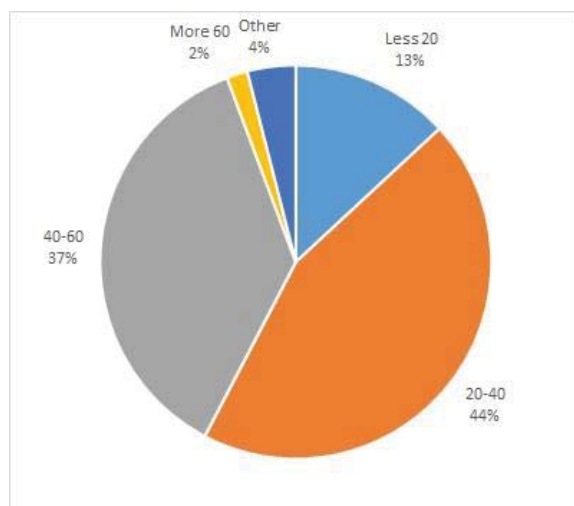


**Figure 3.15.** Length for a training for facilitators

The last questions in the survey asked participants for their opinion as validators or facilitators about the need for training. Firstly, 135 participants in the survey considered that they need to improve their knowledge and skills. In contrast, 9 persons did not consider it necessary, 20 persons were not sure, and 11 of them stated that they were neither validators nor facilitators.
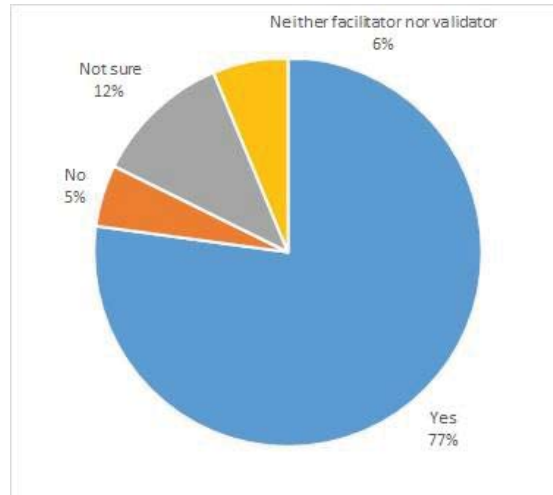
**Figure 3.16.** Perception of the need to improve one's knowledge and skills as facilitators or validators

As for how likely the respondents would enrol in a certificate training program as validator or facilitator, 111 participants answered "Very likely", while 48 persons ticked "Likely". Only 9 persons answered "Not likely", and 7 participants said that they would not enrol. Asked about whether they would recommend such training programs to other validators or facilitators, 131 respondents would do it very likely, 42 persons likely, and only 2 persons would not recommend them.
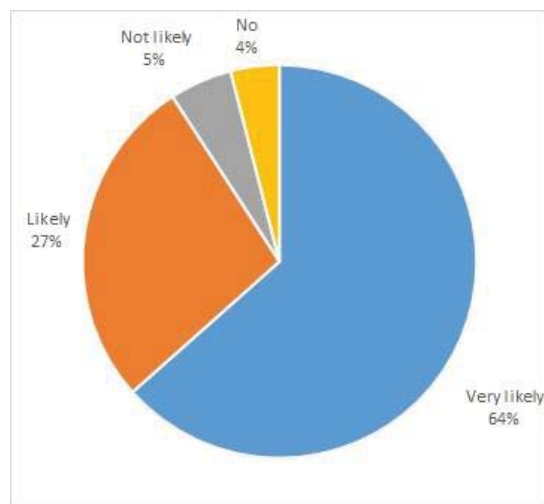


**Figure 3.17.** Likelihood of enrolment in a training for validators or facilitators
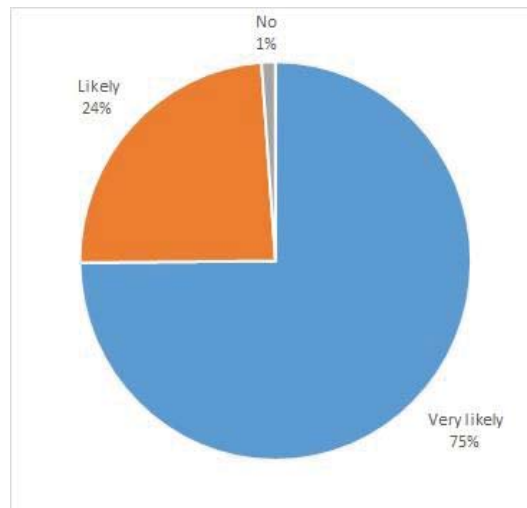
**Figure 3.18.** Likelihood of recommendation of a training to other validators or facilitators

## 3.8. Conclusions

This survey is the first one in Spain conducted with this purpose. There is no precedent reported, and the sample (175 respondents) offer a wide array of relevant data to better understand the current situation in this field. The number of participants in the survey unveils a nascent E2R sector.

The demographic data collected allows describing a general profile for facilitators and validators. In the case of facilitators, they seem to be mainly female, with a university degree, mostly in a social sector, and with former experience as trainers or E2R writers. As for validators, there seems to be a similar number of men and women working in this profession. They have non-university studies, are mostly users of centres of independent living in non-profit organisations linked to intellectual disabilities, and usually work in teams.

It is important to highlight that the lack of official or certified training was not a barrier to look for other solutions to learn about easy-to-read or the characteristics of the roles of validators and facilitators. Data show that almost 90% of the respondents have some kind of E2R training, and 20% of them marked that they are self-taught experts, among other training choices. These figures reveal an interest in learning about these jobs to develop a real profession. It is also relevant that many respondents have a long experience in facilitating or validating E2R documents, which show that the E2R production in Spain has already a history. Additionally, it can be presumed that these figures point to a demand for E2R publications, given the number of respondents already working in these professions.

Data also show that many people linked to easy-to-read are in contact or working with associations of intellectual disabilities, while other profiles with reading difficulties are a minority. On the contrary, these figures point out that the E2R production comes from non-profit organisations, while the private sector is not a market operator yet.

It is possible that, as a consequence of the absence of official training, current jobs related to facilitation or validation are not paid or only part-time. However, respondents show interest in a possible certified training and are leaned to participate in and/or recommend future training programs. In turn, the latter may point to a first step towards the recognition of a profession that already exists, as shown by the high number of respondents and extensive data input about which training elements a program should contain (e.g., types of content and learning materials, length, and workload in hours).

From these data, it is possible to conclude that there is a lack of structure and systematization in training and a lack of official recognition of easy-to-read as a carrier pathway in companies or other types of institutions. Nonetheless, the collected data provide a solid basis for starting bridging gaps, systematising training and working towards an official certification of these two job roles.

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**Webography**

Train2Validate project, "Professional training for easy-to-read facilitators and validators" https://plenainclusionmadrid.org/train2validate/

# 4. Validation of Easy-to-Read content: Insights from German-speaking experts

Rocío BERNABÉ CARO, Piero CAVALLO

## 4.1. Two approaches to assessment of E2R texts

In German-speaking countries, Easy-to-Read language (E2R) is understood as an access enabler to content for people with reading and learning difficulties (Winter 2014; Bock 2015; Mensch zuerst 2021). The development was bottom-up — i.e., driven by end-users for end-users, in line with Charlton's claim "Nothing about us without us" (1998). While the foundation has its roots in participation, there are diverging views regarding the involvement and role that people with reading or learning difficulties should have in the validation of E2R information. As a result, two diverging approaches exist: participatory and non-participatory.

Easy-to-Read first became established in Germany with the foundation of the two end-user organisations — Mensch zuerst[1], which is the German counterpart of the American empowerment People First movement, and Netzwerk Leichte Sprache[2], in 2001 and 2006, respectively (Winter 2014). The latter is a network that joins experts from six European countries: Germany, Austria, Italy, Switzerland, Luxemburg, and the Netherlands. The network understands its approach as participatory and works collaboratively towards developing E2R content by including people with reading and learning difficulties (Netzwerk Leichte Sprache n.d.).

One main output of the network's efforts has been a set of writing recommendations published in 2013 about how to prevent comprehension barriers in texts. The guidelines are experiential and, thus, based on end-users' experience and knowledge, as opposed to empirical-based ones (Winter 2014; Bock 2015; Bredel and Maaß 2016). Despite their non-empirical nature, the recommendations by Netzwerk Leichte Sprache are widely used in German-speaking countries and have been included in the guidelines published by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs for print and web content since they are compliant with the current German Barrier-Free Information Technology Regulation[3] (BMAS 2014).

The guidelines recommend the comprehensibility assessment of texts by end-users as part of the translation process (Netzwerk Leichte Sprache 2013, 2014, 2017). The ability of a text to be understood by the target audience has already been described within the realm of translation as a quality feature that can only be determined in the interaction with the target

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[1] https://www.menschzuerst.de/
[2] https://www.leichte-sprache.org/
[3] Barrierefreie-Informationstechnik-Verordnung, BITV 2.0

audience (Göpferisch 2009; Jensen 2015). From a participatory perspective in E2R contexts, confirming the comprehensibility of a text should be done by validators, as people with reading and learning difficulties (Bernabé and Cavallo 2021).

Participatory validations are carried out either in tandem or in groups by two types of experts: validators and facilitators (BMAS 2013; Schiffler 2018). Each expert has their own role. Firstly, validators evaluate the extent to which the communicative function of a text, as intended by the author, is fulfilled in the E2R version (Bock 2014, 2019). To do so, validators interact with the text to identify barriers. The spotted barriers — be them linguistic, conceptual, typographical, organisational, or other — are then reported to the translator or author for changes (Inclusion Europe 2009; IFLA 2010; Fröhlich and Candussi 2015; Plena Inclusión Madrid 2018; UNE 2018; Schiffler 2018; Bock 2019; Bernabé et al. 2020). As for facilitators, they are people without reading or learning difficulties whose role is to organise, moderate, and support validators during the validation sessions (BMAS 2013; Inclusion Europe 2009; Plena Inclusión Madrid 2018, Bernabé 2020a).

This participatory approach to the quality of E2R texts is also found in other German-speaking countries — for example, capito in Austria — and in other non-educational institutions, such as the German standardisation organisation DIN[4], which is currently drafting a standard for Easy-to-Read texts. Similar accounts are found across Europe, as revealed in Chapters 3, 5, 6 and 7 in this book with regards to Spain, Italy, Romania and Slovenia, respectively.

Among German scholars, participatory approaches to validation exist together with non-participatory ones, where it is not thought that validations should be carried out by people with reading and learning difficulties. Currently, the leading academic representative of participatory approaches is the University of Leipzig, with the LeiSA[5] project and, most recently, the International University of the SDI München[6], in Germany, with a focus on digital and audiovisual information (Bernabé and Cavallo 2021).

For its part, non-participatory approaches are represented in Germany by the University of Hildesheim and the Johannes-Gutenberg University in Mainz. From their perspective, validation processes are strictly normed and are subject to the use of a limited number of linguistic features that are empirically based (Maaß 2015; Bredel and Maaß 2016; Bock 2014). This approach is, therefore, text-based or rule-based. The underlying assumption of non-participatory validation is that the use of empirical-based parameters to reduce the linguistic complexity of texts should be assessed with automatic readability tools[7] and text analysis by trained experts who have access to both text versions, i.e., the standard and the E2R one (Hansen-Schirra and Gutermuth 2020). These methods are prioritised over participatory validation, which is considered to draw upon individual opinions of people who have been put together randomly (Maaß, Rink and Zehrer 2014). Nonetheless, it should be

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[5] https://research.uni-leipzig.de/leisa/

[6] http://www.sdi-muenchen.de/

[7] For instance, Textlab: https://www.comlab-ulm.de/textlab/

pointed out that rule-based approaches do not entirely exclude end-user participation. On the contrary, they underline its effectiveness for research purposes as shown in the user-centric comprehensibility studies conducted by Hansen-Schirra and Gutermuth (2020).

Similarly, participatory approaches recognise the need for evidence-based, textual, and linguistic features for creation — although the validation by end-users remains key (Bock 2014, 2019; Göpferisch 2009). The underlying idea is that E2R texts should convey the essence of the information and do not need to be one-to-one translations of an original. In some cases, this might mean omitting information. In others, it might involve adding information that was implied in the standard text. Moreover, Fröhlich and Candussi (2015) state that participatory validations enable identifying barriers related to non-linguistic factors, such as prior knowledge and experience, both of which have been shown to influence learning and comprehension (Carrel 1983; Ambrose et al. 2010; Lundberg and Reichenberg 2013).

Despite their differences, all stakeholders, from end-user associations to scholars, agree on the need for further research and systematisation of both creation and validation processes (Inclusion Europe 2009; IFLA 2010; Fröhlich 2017; Bredel and Maaß 2016; Bock 2017; Hansen-Schirra and Gutermuth 2020; Bernabé 2020b).

The Erasmus+ project Train2Validate[8] (T2V) aims to contribute to the development of participatory validation, recognition of the job roles involved, and harmonisation of training programmes for facilitators and validators. A fundamental step towards this goal was to collect data about current practice and training across Europe to understand the situation and identify who these professionals are, what they do, and what skills should be part of training programmes. To do so, the T2V consortium designed and launched an online survey in February 2021. To ease access, the questionnaire was written in simplified English and then translated into the project languages: German, Italian, Romanian, Slovene, and Spanish. This methodology was chosen due to the effectiveness of this tool in cases when potential respondents are geographically distant (Wright 2005) or, as it was then, during the Covid-19 restrictions. As described by Bernabé and Cavallo (2021), the methodology was also adapted to the framework of Erasmus+ projects with limited timelines and funding to implement each Intellectual Output. While these constraints forced the consortium to rule out other methods — such as interviews or focus groups — the process is in line with current research practice (Boynton and Greenhalgh 2004) and was guided by three universities following ethical standards (APA 2020). Chapter 2 in this book describes the methodology more thoroughly.

The following sections present the data collected in the German questionnaire.

### 4.1.1. Language-specific aspects of the questionnaire

The questionnaire was translated into German by students at the Professional College of Translation and Interpreting of the SDI München in collaboration with the European Certification and Qualification Association, ECQA, based in Austria. Two linguistic issues arose during the translation stage that had to be tackled before administering the questionnaire: finding a German term to designate facilitators and the use of gender-neutral language.

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[8] http://plenainclusionmadrid.org/train2validate

While the expressions 'validation group' (in German, *Prüfgruppe*) and 'validator' (*Prüfer, Prüferin, Prüfer:innen*) are established terms in German-speaking countries, there is still a terminological void with regards to the term 'facilitators' (Schiffler 2018; Bernabé and Cavallo 2021). Currently, there are only two publications that describe the job role. One title is a non-academic informative booklet about validation that was published by Netzwerk Leichte Sprache (2017). The other one is an academic book chapter by Fröhlich (2017) from capito e.V. in Austria. In the first document, facilitators are referred to as *Prüf-Assistenz* and, in the second one, as *Moderator*. In both publications, the role descriptions overlap:

> „Die Prüf-Assistenten oder Übersetzer können uns Fragen zum Text stellen. Sie können uns auch beim Lesen zu-hören. Vielleicht ist ein Wort zu lang. Dann ist das Lesen schwer. Und die Prüf-Assistenten oder Übersetzer hören das beim Lesen." (Netzwerk Leichte Sprache 2017, 8)
> *[Facilitators and translators can ask us questions about the text. They can also listen to us reading the text aloud. Maybe a word is too long. Then it is difficult to read. And the facilitators and translators become aware of it during the reading.] (Translation by the authors)*
> "In der Prüfgruppe werden die Inhalte der Information von den Prüferinnen und Prüfern paraphrasiert und mit gezielten Fragen der Moderation überprüft, ob und in welcher Form die Prüferinnen und Prüfer die angebotene Information finden und nutzen können." (Fröhlich 2017, 424)
> *[In the validation session, validators paraphrase the content provided in the text. In the process, the moderator facilitates questions to assess whether and how validators can find and use the information offered.] (Translation by the authors)*

The overall lack of references led partners to conduct an informal ad hoc consultation via email and telephone, reaching out within their networks (Bernabé, personal communication, 2020). A total of 8 people were asked their opinion about the terms *Prüf-Assistent* and *Prüf-Moderator*. All 8 individuals work in E2R: 5 work at a university, 1 is a validator, 1 works full-time in an Easy-to-Read translation agency, and 1 works for an end-user association. Out of the 8 people, 3 work as facilitators, and 5 of them know the job role but do not facilitate validations themselves.

All respondents agreed that the term *Prüf-Assistent* is not used or known within their organisations and professional networks. Indeed, the facilitators explained that, although they have been facilitating groups or tandem sessions for years now, validators never use a specific term for them, nor is there a term in their job description or organisations to refer to this task. After several discussion rounds, participants agreed that the term *Prüf-Moderator* best reflects the main task, which is to enable the assessment process in collaboration with validators. Although the data from the consultation lacks scientific relevance, it does support the presumed (in)visibility of the job role today.

The second step that was necessary before launching the questionnaire was to choose — from the two established practices in Germany, i.e., between the use of an asterisk[9] or a semicolon — gender-neutral terms for the two roles. While both solutions are in use in German, partners preferred the semicolon because it was considered to be more accessible by screen-readers and, thus, user-friendlier for people with sight loss (Poth 2020). The final terms used then were: *Prüfer:innen* for validators and *Prüf-Moderator:innen* for facilitators.

## 4.2. Results

This section presents the results obtained from the 15 respondents of the German version of the survey. To ease the presentation, the results are presented in the 5 sections of the survey:

- Section 1. Demographic Profile,
- Section 2. General Education and Training,
- Section 3. Education and Training in E2R,
- Section 4. Your Current Activity
    - 4.1. Your Current Activity as a Validator
    - 4.2. Your Current Activity as a Facilitator
- Section 5. Skills, and other Training components.

Overall, the number of responses in the German survey does not reflect data from actual validation practice. For instance, Netzwerk Leichte Sprache has 200 members in 8 different countries and a total of 25 agencies working in the field of participatory validation (T. Lotze, personal communication, August 2021). Similarly, the capito and atempo networks are represented in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, and have a total of 617 employees, among them 509 individuals with disabilities who mainly work as validators (capito 2019)[10]. The number would increase if we were also to consider other associations and institutions that offer or conduct validations, such as Mensch zuerst e.V., Caritas Augsburg, or benqua Karlsruhe (Schiffler 2020), or Lebenshilfe Bremen.

It can be presumed that this divergency is coherent with the fact that end-user validation is mainly supported and represented in German-speaking countries outside academia and with the overall (in)visibility of the profiles. All these points underline the need for recognition and harmonisation identified by the Train2Validate consortium (Train2Validate 2020).

## 4.2.1. Demographic profile

This section included 5 questions, 1 of them being optional. The personal data gathered should enable us to identify factors that may influence the answers and study how the profiles may vary across the German-speaking participants and across respondents at a project level (Flick 2004; De Franzo, n.d.). Furthermore, the demographic data collected should also support the

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[9] A recent study (Köhler and Wahl 2021) shows that the preferred symbol in Germany among target groups is the asterisk.
[10] https://digital.capito.eu/

profiling of prospective trainees during the next Intellectual Outputs (IOs) in the project, especially the curriculum design (IO3) and the creation of the training materials (IO4) (Thomas and May 2010; Atkinson 2018).

Out of 15 respondents, 12 (80%) live in Germany, while the other 3 respondents (20%) come from Austria, Switzerland, and Hungary, respectively. As for their first languages, they for the most part reflect the official language of their countries, i.e., German. Nonetheless, 2 individuals with Spanish or Hungarian as their first language took the German survey.

Young adults aged 20-30 comprised the largest group in the age distribution (40%), with older adults aged 41-50 and those aged 51-60 represented equally (27% each). Most notably, those aged 31-40 were comparatively under-represented (6%).
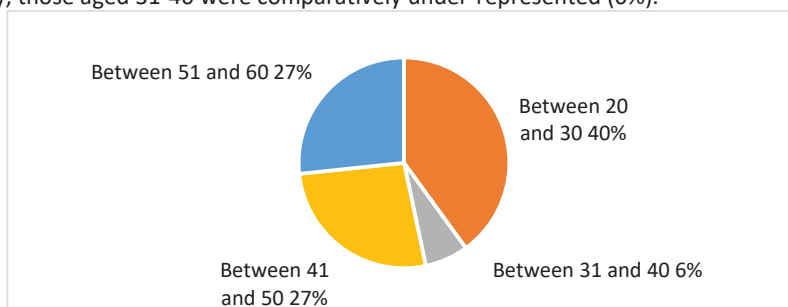


**Figure 4.1.** Age distribution among participants

Lastly, the majority of the participants (60%) identified themselves as female (9 out of 15), 27% as male (4). One individual chose the option 'Other' and another one preferred not to answer.
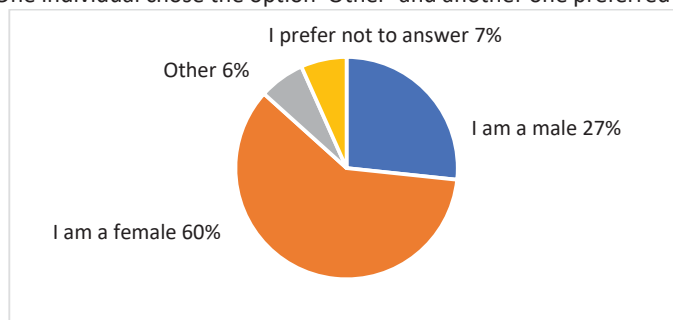


**Figure 4.2.** Gender distribution among participants

The optional text box at the end of this section gathered the input by one respondent who stated that he was enrolled on a course for validators in Hungary at the University of Szeged.

### 4.2.2. General Education and Training

This section included 3 questions, 1 of them being optional. Gathering data about respondents' educational backgrounds facilitates identifying their learning experiences and range of literacies. This type of information supports the design of inclusive curricula that fit trainees

with different epistemological backgrounds in learning, support trainees in the transition and use of previous knowledge, and reduce attrition (Walker and Evers 1982; Thomas and May 2010; Latif et al. 2020).

The majority of the respondents (14 out of 15) hold a higher-education degree, with 2 of them holding an undergraduate academic degree, 7 holding a master's degree, and 5 holding a PhD/doctorate degree. One respondent has completed a training course in a vocational training institution (in German, *Berufsbildungswerk*).
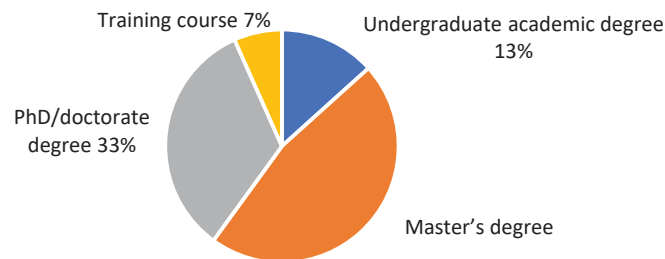


**Figure 4.3.** Level of education of respondents

This wide range of backgrounds, from various academic degrees to vocational, may suggest that there are, as yet, no defined pre-requisites for starting a career as a facilitator or a validator, and that the specialisation and skills are learned formally, non-formally, or informally (OECD 2005).

This lack of systematisation is in line with the responses regarding the pathways for continuous learning. That is, almost all participants continue to improve their skills by reading existing literature relevant to their line of work, by communicating with peer experts, or by participating in conferences, workshops, etc.

| Activity | Number of answers | Percentage[11] |
|---|---|---|
| I read existing literature relevant for my line of work | 14 | 93.3% |
| I communicate with other experts | 13 | 86.7% |
| I participate in conferences, workshops, etc. | 12 | 80% |
| I do research | 11 | 73.3% |
| I communicate with users | 11 | 73.3% |
| I participate in in-house training (conducted at a company/institution, etc.) | 5 | 33.3% |

**Table 4.1.** Responses to the question about how to improve own skills

At the end of the section, an optional free-text box was made available. One respondent stated that she trains prospective validators and facilitates validations herself. This person explained

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[11] The data presented in tables in this chapter is ordered by percentages to facilitate reading.

that they often discuss the meaning of "comprehensible" at work and added that they offer inclusive training, which enables them to learn about and from each other.

This input hints at the value of participatory training and aligns with the 73.3% obtained in "I communicate with users" as a learning activity.

### 4.2.3. Education and training in E2R

This section included 11 questions, 1 of them optional, and aimed to gather the input from respondents who had undergone specific training in E2R. Out of the 15 respondents, 10 stated that they had received training related to E2R, while 5 had not.

The data show that the respondents have acquired their knowledge mostly in a formal setting at the university. The fact that most respondents also chose a type of non-formal setting may indicate that training in German-speaking countries takes place both within and outside academia.

| Type of training | Number of answers | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| I have attended a university course | 7 | 70% |
| I have attended workshops | 5 | 50% |
| I am a self-taught expert | 3 | 30% |
| I have done an internship and have worked at a firm/association for a short period | 2 | 20% |
| Other | 2 | 20% |
| I have attended a vocational course | 1 | 10% |
| I have received in-house training (at my company/institution, etc.) | 1 | 10% |

**Table 4.2.** Types of Easy-to-Read trainings

According to the data, all the 10 respondents who have received training related to E2R are familiar both with printed and digital content. Similarly, 8 respondents are also acquainted with audio content and audiovisual content, which included interpreting. While 50% of them have undergone general training in several fields, the other 50% have received training in a specific field. Similarly, all or almost all respondents who have received training related to E2R are familiar with the activities listed in the table below.

| Activity | Number of answers | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Creating/writing of E2R texts | 10 | 100% |
| Adapting/editing/translating texts into E2R texts | 10 | 100% |
| Proofreading/revising E2R texts | 10 | 100% |
| Validating E2R texts with end users | 7 | 70% |
| Use of dedicated software and hardware | 7 | 70% |

**Table 4.3.** Types of Easy-to-Read activities with which respondents are familiar

Interestingly, when asked whether E2R-trained respondents would like to receive additional training in other fields or content, 60% answered "No". In contrast, 40% of respondents expressed their interest in different types of content and related disciplines, including audio description in plain language, speech-to-text reporting, and user experience.

These divergent opinions could signify that mastering these tasks (see table above) provides them with the necessary skills to approach all kinds of text types. Similarly, it could mean that current demand is limited to certain text types, such as informative ones, or that there is a lack of awareness about how knowledge in other fields can improve current outcomes.

Knowing about professionals' training experience with educational materials and activities can provide the Train2Validate consortium with resourceful guidance in the creation of training materials for prospective trainees in Intellectual Output 4. The responses show that hands-on activities have been more useful according to respondents' preferences compared to lectures or the analysis of existing content.

| Activities | Number of answers | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Practical proofreading/revision exercises | 9 | 90% |
| Practical adaptation/translation exercises | 9 | 90% |
| Practical creation/writing exercises | 8 | 80% |
| Internship and working with experts | 8 | 80% |
| Validation/revision/quality control | 7 | 70% |
| Class discussion based on errors | 7 | 70% |
| Discussing and comparing easy-to-read guidelines | 6 | 60% |
| Analysing existing easy-to-read content | 5 | 50% |
| Lectures | 4 | 40% |
| Other | 2 | 20% |

**Table 4.4.** More useful Easy-to-Read activities for the respondents

Other additional answers include: carrying out scientific-related tasks, such as writing scientific essays, or designing scientific posters, and working with representatives of primary end users.

Respondents' choices seem to align with the assumption that knowledge cannot be passed from one person to another in the style of the Nuremberg funnel learning model. This has been described in teaching research as the "information transmission fallacy" (Schmidt et al. 2015, 14). The underlying idea is that the effectiveness of lectures is limited (Corey 1934; Schmidt et al. 2010). While lectures are effective in delivering explanations and declarative input, they do not seem to promote critical thinking or student engagement (Schmidt et al. 2010). Moreover, for learners to be able to recall and use this information in problem-solving tasks, they must engage actively and create their own knowledge — for instance, through practical, individual, or collaborative activities (Dewey 1916; Wilson et al. 1974; Hall 1988; Kiraly 2000; Ebner 2008).

The uptake from the collected data is that the T2V training materials should include both lectures and practical activities — that is, to rely on lectures to introduce, clarify concepts and even take students behind the scenes of a story, but also to include problem-solving activities or case studies that can be carried out individually or in collaborative learning spaces.

Training activities sometimes require the use of handbooks, books, guidelines, or other types of materials. In German-speaking countries, there are three main guidelines or

writing recommendations for E2R content: those published by Netzwerk Leichte Sprache, by the University of Hildesheim, both available for free, and by capito, available for a fee.

The guidelines by Netzwerk Leichte Sprache are very similar to those published in 2009 by Inclusion Europe within the framework of the project Pathways. The latter are the most used guidelines across Europe, according to the results of a survey that we conducted in the EASIT project (EASIT 2019).

When asked about the use of a handbook during training, only 2 out of 10 answered that they had not received, nor had they used, handbooks for training. The remaining respondents stated that they used some guidelines for E2R training. This points to a consolidated presence of E2R guidelines in German-speaking countries. Similarly, for the T2V curriculum, this may imply that prospective German students will expect to use guidelines during training.

Respondents were also asked about what content, areas of knowledge, or activities they missed during training. Half of the E2R-trained respondents (5 out of 10) stated that they did not think they had missed anything during training, while the other half thought that they had, especially the contact with peer experts in the field and with end-users.

Lastly, the questionnaire included a question about the duration of training. Collecting data about current training duration can provide the T2V consortium with guidance in terms of overall workload and how to translate these hours into credits (ECTS[12]/ECVETS[13]). Describing workload in terms of ECTS for higher education institutions or in ECVETS for vocational organisations supports the recognition of skills across Europe (Rauhvargers 2004; Wagenaar 2014).

Out of 10 respondents, 7 have been trained for more than 60 hours. The remaining 3 have been trained for less than 20 hours, between 20 and 40 hours, and between 40 and 60 hours, respectively.
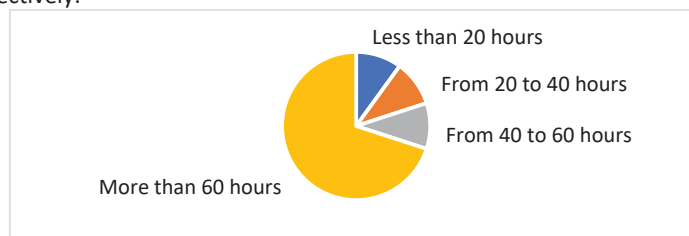


**Figure 4.4.** Training duration

### 4.2.4. Current activity

After gathering data about who these professionals are and their training experiences, the next step was to learn more about their work as facilitators or validators. This section included 10 questions, 1 of them being optional. The overall goal was to identify current market

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[12] The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System was introduced in Europe after the Bologna Declaration in 1999 and aims at "making studies and courses more transparent and thus helping to enhance the quality of higher education" (ECTS' Users Guide 2015: 6).
[13] ECVETS is the term used in vocational contexts (Cedefop 2010).

requirements that future T2V trainees will have to meet when entering the profession. The underlying idea is that qualifications should enable people to acquire skills and competences that match those needed in the market (European Commission 2020; Cedefop 2020).

According to the data, respondents work mainly at a university or in a research institution, in combination or not with a freelance career. Other respondents work in a not-for-profit organisation, either exclusively or not.

| Activities | Number of answers | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Freelancer | 7 | 46.7% |
| University/research institution | 7 | 46.7% |
| Non-for-profit organization | 4 | 26.7% |

**Table 4.5.** Current working situation of respondents

When asked if they collaborate with or are a member of an association, the majority of the respondents (8 responses, or 53.3%) answered "No". The responses revealed that those respondents who collaborate with or are a member of an association are linked mainly to associations that work with people with intellectual disabilities (e.g., ÉFOÉSZ or Netzwerk Leichte Sprache) or to associations of people with sensory disabilities.

The input shows that permanent jobs seem to be mainly in the educational and social labour sectors while a similar part of the demand is covered by freelancers. This input matches the respondents' professional roles before entering the field of E2R — mainly social workers and students/educators/teachers, followed by researchers, translators, and other jobs related to communication and to tutoring for people with special needs.
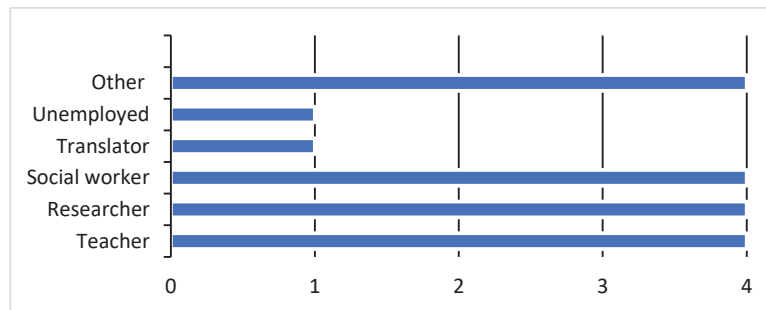


**Figure 4.5.** Former profession before becoming Easy-to-Read expert

The answers concerning the number of workhours as an expert in E2R content and the payment show a uniform picture, with respondents working either part-time, full-time, or as volunteers.
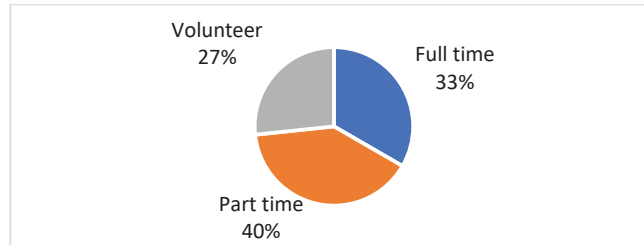
**Figure 4.6.** Contractual tie with the organization

The majority of the respondents are paid for their job, but their main income is from other professions, while one third revealed that their main income is from their job in E2R. Only 3 respondents receive no remuneration.
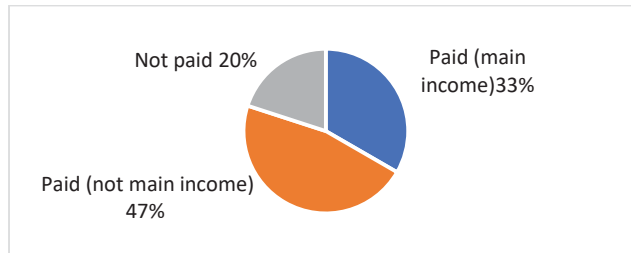
**Figure 4.7.** Incomes from Easy-to-Read activity

Not surprisingly, the language in which respondents work with E2R content is German, in combination or not with other languages, such as English and/or Spanish, or in German plain language. Only one respondent works exclusively with Hungarian.

Respondents have been working with E2R content either between 1 and 5 years (8 respondents) or more than 5 years (7 respondents). 8 respondents also said that they work with E2R content for more than 8 hours per week, 4 respondents said it varied between 1 and 8 hours per week, and 3 respondents dedicate less than 1 hour per week to E2R content.
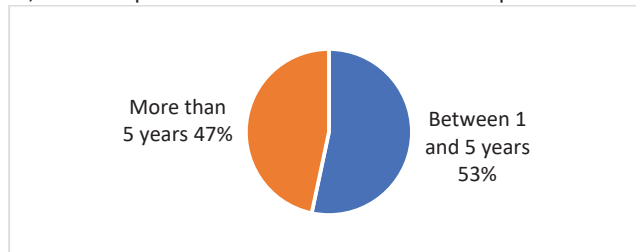
**Figure 4.8.** Experience working with Easy-to-Read
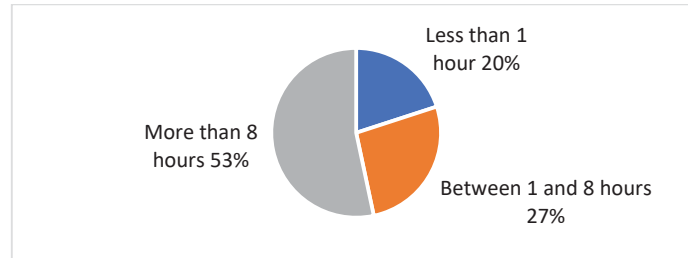
**Figure 4.9.** Weekly dedication to Easy-to-Read in hours

### 4.2.4.1. Validators

Section 4.1 of the survey was dedicated to validators. This section included 10 questions, 1 of them being optional. Of the 15 people who answered the German survey, only 2 are validators, both untrained. One of them has worked on one validation project, while the other one has collaborated on over 10 validation projects.

Both respondents mainly work alone. One validator reported working with a colleague who writes texts in plain language that are later corrected by someone with reading or learning difficulties.

As for the length of a validation session, both validators said that it usually lasts for less than 2 hours. One validator never uses guidelines, while the validator who has been involved in over 10 projects always uses guidelines, more specifically national guidelines.

Given the overall low number of responses from validators, we can only extract input that needs to be cross-matched with the results from the other countries.

### 4.2.4.2. Facilitators

Section 4.2 of the survey was dedicated to facilitators. This section included 14 questions, 1 of them being optional. A total of 7 responses were collected: among respondents, 5 (71.4%) stated that they are not trained facilitators, while 2 (28.6%) had received training.

Before working as facilitators, the respondents had mainly worked either as translators, researchers, or trainers. Some facilitators have also worked as writers, educators for people with special needs, or as auditors.
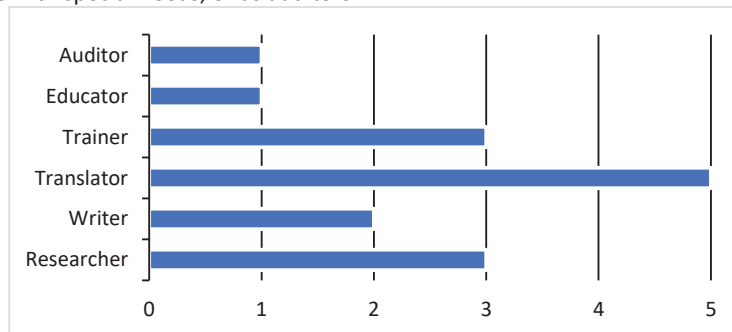


**Figure 4.10.** Former positions of current facilitators

All facilitators who answered this section produce/write E2R content, while the majority also translate E2R content and/or give workshops/lectures on E2R. Some respondents also review E2R content or do research, and one is an editor. Two of them also fill other kinds of position: one works as a consultant of E2R, and another one acts as a multiplicator.

| Activities | Number of answers | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| I produce / write E2R content | 7 | 100% |
| I translate E2R content | 6 | 85.7% |
| I give workshops / lectures on E2R | 6 | 85.7% |
| I review E2R content | 3 | 42.9% |
| I do research | 2 | 28.6% |
| Other (E2R consultant and multiplicator) | 2 | 28.6% |
| I am an editor | 1 | 14.3% |

**Table 4.6.** Activities that facilitators develop simultaneously

From the responses, it can be deduced that facilitators simultaneously work creating or translating content, or training. A comparison with the responses from the other questionnaires may shed light on whether this is also the case in other countries. The fact that current facilitators already review texts shows that text-based and participatory quality assessments can co-exist and maybe benefit from each other.

Most facilitators (6 respondents or 85.7%) reported that they had facilitated more than 10 facilitation projects, while one facilitator (14.3%) had assisted just one project.

As regards to the strategies for assessing the feasibility of a validation project, the answers vary, as shown in the figure below, although communication with peers is key.



**Figure 4.11.** Strategies for assessing the feasibility of a validation project

The decision criteria applied by respondents can only be presumed and may include measurable ones, such as those provided by one respondent in a free-text box: timeline, availability of a validators, topic, and text type.

The figure below illustrates with whom facilitators communicate in the production process. Again, the responses show the high involvement of end-users.
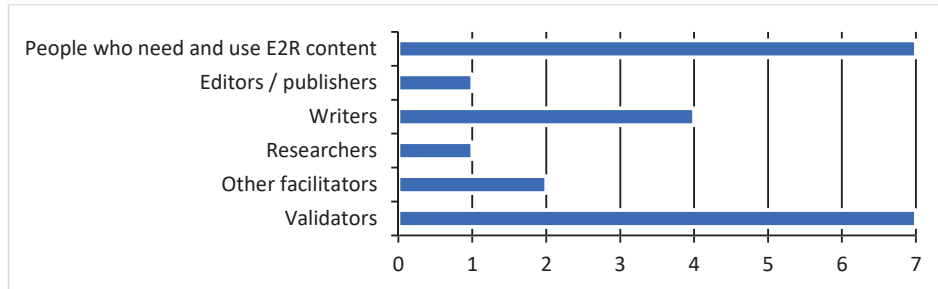
**Figure 4.12.** Persons with whom facilitators communicate in the production process

These answers point at effective communication skills being a key component of a facilitator's job role in E2R contexts. Communication skills as a critical ability aligns with the concept of facilitation in other fields, such as in health care (UNM 2018) or education (Muste 2016). Nonetheless, communication can only be effective if it is target-group-oriented (McNaughton and Light 2009; Muste 2016).

The responses gathered also provide us with insights about the facilitation process. Regarding the size of a validation team, the numbers range from 5 or more people (5 responses, or 71.4%) to 2 or less (2 responses, or 28.6%).

In the majority of cases (4 responses, 57%), facilitators themselves are in charge of setting up the validation team for a project. According to the responses, facilitators and validators decide ad hoc and collaboratively. One free-text answer provides detailed insight about the process and criteria: "We have several validators who have received a short training through the Netzwerk [Leichte Sprache]. Often 2-3 validators from this trained pool participate in a validation. We choose the team according to criteria, such as timeline and topic. The latter is critical to us, i.e., to make sure that the topic is not a triggering one, i.e., that the topics are okay for everyone and that no one is triggered." Related to this topic, one respondent, who is a facilitator, explains that sharing the topics of upcoming jobs with validators and asking them for their availability is part of the planning process.

Once a validation is completed, facilitators usually communicate with E2R writers, either in writing, face-to-face, or in other formats, as explained in the table below.

| Communication channels | Number of answers | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| In writing: I draft a validation report and send it to them by email | 5 | 71.4% |
| Face-to-face: I facilitate a meeting between the validator and the writer | 4 | 57.1% |
| By phone: I set up a meeting and personally update the writer | 2 | 28.6% |
| Face-to-face: I set up a meeting and personally discuss with the writer the comments of the validator | 2 | 28.6% |
| Other | 1 | 14.3% |

**Table 4.7.** Communication with Easy-to-Read writers after validation

Facilitators (5 respondents, or 71.4%) also receive feedback from E2R writers based on the validation comments. Where necessary, most of the communication takes place via email or by phone.

Once facilitators receive the updated version, they usually forward it directly to the validator or the team for approval (5 responses, or 71.4%) or first check it for changes (4 responses, or 57.1%).

The facilitation process described by the German-speaking respondents seems to be very similar to that defined by Plena Inclusión Madrid (2018) for printed and illustrated texts and adapted by Bernabé et al. (2020) for audio visual content. Figure 4.13. shows the stages as described by the latter.
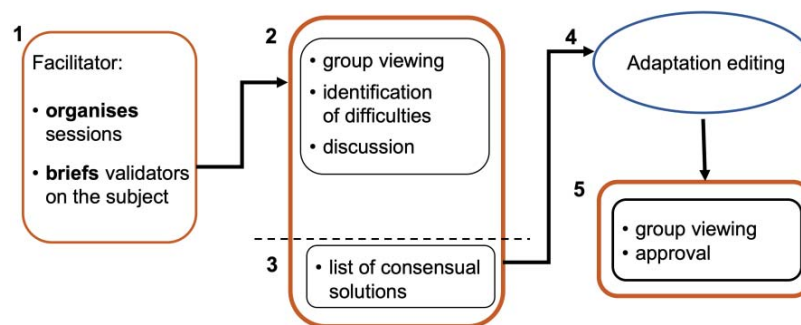


**Figure 4.13.** Stages of a validation process

Lastly, respondents were consulted about the tools used by facilitators to organise the facilitation sessions. The most used ones are video-conferencing systems, as the table shows.

| Tools | Number of answers | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Video-conferencing systems | 5 | 71.4% |
| Computer-based work management tools (electronic calendars, reminders, etc.) | 4 | 57.1% |
| Web-based communication platforms | 3 | 42.9% |
| Other | 3 | 42.9% |
| Traditional work management tools (printed calendars, notebooks, reminders, etc.) | 2 | 28.6% |
| Dedicated software (text editors, etc.) | 1 | 14.3% |

**Table 4.8.** Tools used by facilitators to organize validation sessions

The input collected in this section already encompasses valuable data for drafting a skills card for facilitators — that is, a checklist of personal and interpersonal skills with a focus on target user-centric communication skills, management skills, IT skills, and knowledge about Easy-to-Read in general and E2R writing principles. To obtain a deeper insight into the skills and skillsets for each profile, the questionnaire included a separate section. The results are presented below.

## 4.2.5. Skills

Section 5 of the survey included questions about the core activities carried out by the two professionals and the necessary knowledge and skills. The section included 11 questions, 1 of them being optional. We assumed that professionals from the field of E2R would deliver pieces of information from their own experiences about what abilities and topics should be targeted at training.

To support the process, respondents were presented lists of topics, activities, and abilities and asked to select those that they consider applicable. Furthermore, a space for free answers and additions was available at the end of the section. By doing so, we were able to collect both quantitative and qualitative data.

First, the process of validation. Respondents selected those items that they believe to define the quality assessment of a text during validation. According to the data, macro-typography of a text, i.e., layout and design (Wolfer 2015), text fluency, organisation and structure were selected most often. Interestingly, the latter have been described by scholars from the field of cognitive text simplification — such as Arfé, Mason and Fajardo (2018), Saggion (2017), and Bock (2018) — as a key dimension in comprehension which aims to support text coherence.

Then, according to the responses, validators should also evaluate whether an E2R text is clear, accurate, natural, consistent, acceptable and informative enough, and if multimodality is well used. The least rated category had to do with whether the E2R text is grammatically correct, words are properly chosen and spelt, and punctuation is correct.

| Assessment goal of a validation | Number of answers | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| If the E2R text design and layout are correct | 14 | 93.3% |
| If the E2R text is fluent, well organized and structured | 13 | 86.7% |
| If the E2R text is clear, accurate, natural and consistent | 12 | 80% |
| If the E2R text is acceptable and informative enough | 8 | 53.3% |
| If multimodality is well used | 7 | 46.7% |
| If the E2R text is grammatically correct, words are properly chosen and spelt, and punctuation is correct | 5 | 33.3% |
| Other | 2 | 13.3% |

**Table 4.9.** What should validators check in their activity?

In the free-text box, one respondent stated: "Validators do not know whether 'all information' is included. Only the author can answer this, and a facilitator can make a Target-Actual comparison. The facilitator could also compare the source text with the target text. Validators cannot do this." It can be presumed that this remark grounds on the fact that validators with reading and learning difficulties cannot access the original text and, therefore, cannot judge whether the E2R version contains all the necessary information. This assertion outlines the foregoing statement about a lack of definition of quality, its assessment, and the pursued aims.

The percentages reached also show a counterview — that people with reading and learning difficulties can assess whether an E2R text is "acceptable and informative enough"

(fourth item in the table above). These terms are vague and, therefore, it can be assumed that this task requires special attention from facilitators, who would need to include questions to deliver proof that validators can use the information as intended in the original, be it, for instance, to vote during an election or to understand the plot of a theatre play or follow technical instructions.

In a nutshell, we can say that respondents chose six categories that influence the quality of an E2R text. These are macro-typography, text organisation, text typology, text modality (e.g., printed, digital, audiovisual), usability, and language.

The next question in the survey concerned the knowledge and skills that a validator should have in order to carry out assessments of E2R texts. An interpersonal skill — being able to work on teams — received the highest number of mentions, followed by personal skills such as reading skills and active listening skills. Conversely, other personal skills were chosen less often: having vocal and communication skills and writing skills (including punctuation and spelling) but also computer skills (including dedicated software and new technologies) and organisational and time management skills.

The responses also underline that validators should have text knowledge and skills that encompass multimodality, including moving images, pictures, tone of voice, noises, and background music, etc. They should know about Easy-to-Read principles, guidelines, recommendations, and standards, and be familiar with the content and structure of different text types and genres. Lastly, the responses suggest that having global Easy-to-Read knowledge (e.g., history, guidelines, target groups) is not considered crucial.

| Skills and knowledge | Number of answers | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Skills for working in teams | 11 | 73.3% |
| Reading skills | 10 | 66.7% |
| Active listening skills | 8 | 53.3% |
| Multimodality (including moving images, pictures, tone of voice, noises, background music, etc.) | 8 | 53.3% |
| Easy-to-Read principles, guidelines, recommendations, and standards | 7 | 46.7% |
| Genre knowledge (familiarity with the content and structure of different text types) | 7 | 46.7% |
| Global Easy-to-Read knowledge: history, guidelines, target groups | 5 | 33.3% |
| Vocal and communication skills | 5 | 33.3% |
| Writing skills (including punctuation and spelling) | 4 | 26.7% |
| Computer skills (including dedicated software and new technologies) | 4 | 26.7% |
| Organization and time management skills | 4 | 26.7% |
| Other | 4 | 26.7% |

**Table 4.10.** Knowledge and skills that a validator should have.

Qualitative input points to other skills, such as personal motivation. A respondent clarifies his/her understanding of validation as a comprehensibility assessment and a text comprising a set of predefined rules. The person also explains that validators check whether they can make

sense out of a text, and ranks this task as the primary goal of validation (translation by the authors):

> "Good validators must first and foremost have a desire to assess. They should know the rules that constitute easy language for them. For example, short sentences, each sentence on one line. They don't have to know any rules about the genitive, subjunctive or anything like that. The point is to understand the text, not to know and be able to apply all the rules."

Another free-text response also highlights the importance of self-motivation, training, a trial period, and continuous learning. The person suggests that training should last six months. During this period, validators should find out whether they enjoy validation work and train their skills to communicate within the team. That is, being assertive and self-confident enough to discuss text barriers and suggest alternatives while being respectful of the opinions of others. To develop a key personal skill — namely, the mindset that validators should have towards difficulties — validators should also be trained to realise that "not understanding" a text does not have to do with one's abilities but with the text itself.

> "There are no good and bad validators. The moderator empowers the validators. It is important to have a long training period of at least 1/2 year, because validators first have to find out whether they enjoy their work. Validators must be at peace with themselves. This means accepting the difficulties that they encounter and being brave enough to demand improvements to texts. This is what validators learn in the training. And this needs to be reinforced and repeated regularly."

The third free-text response aligns with the previous ones and underpins again the importance of training communication skills to safeguard the process:

> "A small remark about good communication. I think it is important to communicate well with each other and to take good care of each other in validation group. It is important to have a tolerance for mistakes among each other and to have a safe space. There must always be the confidence to say that you don't understand something well. This [moderation] is the task of the facilitator, but the validators should also be aware of it and hold to it."

To sum up, the qualitative input collected aligns with the quantitative data and provides detailed understandings. For instance, validators need to know simplification rules and principles to use them as tools to describe the difficulties they spot during validation. However, assessing their compliance is not the purpose of the validation itself.

Lastly, the insights highlight the need for a "safe space". Creating such an environment is attached to the facilitator's role and the communication skills of validators, which need to be trained. Three critical aspects thereof seem to be learning how to

communicate one's own views and difficulties, being active, and learning how to keep a healthy distance from why the information "is not understood".

The next questions aimed to gather information about the knowledge and skills that a facilitator should have or apply in a validation process. It stands out that all listed items received high number of mentions, over 60%. Respondents consider having knowledge about target groups — types of disabilities, needs, perception and cognitive processing — the most relevant aspect of the job. Having global knowledge about E2R (history, guidelines, target groups) is rated as important as having organisational skills, team working skills and time management skills. Interestingly, respondents rated having basic validation skills and strategies to develop validations higher than familiarity with basic communication and mediation principles. This may suggest that both tasks overlap but that there are specific strategies that are used in participatory validation.

Genre knowledge (familiarity with the content and structure of different text types) and multimodality, including the role of paratextual information, also received high scores. Somewhat less so, (media) accessibility: standards, legislation, guidelines, principles and applicable scenarios, technologies, etc. (with 9 responses, or 60%). The responses show that knowledge and skills related to text creation is considered more important than background knowledge about legislation and standards.

Lastly, computer skills, including dedicated software and new technologies received 10 responses, which accounts for a 66.7%. The table below shows all items ordered by percentage.

| Knowledge and skills | Number of answers | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Target groups: types of disabilities, needs, perception and cognitive processing | 13 | 86.7% |
| Global Easy-to-Read knowledge: history, guidelines, target groups | 12 | 80% |
| Organizational skills, including working in teams | 12 | 80% |
| Time management skills | 12 | 80% |
| Basic validation skills and strategies to develop validations | 11 | 73.3% |
| Genre knowledge (familiarity with the content and structure of different text types) | 11 | 73.3% |
| Multimodality (including the role of paratextual information) | 11 | 73.3% |
| Familiarity with basic communication and mediation principles | 10 | 66.7% |
| Computer skills (including dedicated software and new technologies) | 10 | 66.7% |
| (Media) accessibility (standards, legislation, guidelines, principles and applicable scenarios, technologies, etc.) | 9 | 60% |
| Other | 2 | 13.3% |

**Table 4.11.** Knowledge and skills that a facilitator should have

One respondent specified that:

"The facilitator should only have basic theoretical knowledge about disability, the needs of the groups become well-defined when working together."

Having these skillsets does not mean that the descriptions are exhaustive or valid across Europe. To avoid this potential pitfall, the consortium has dedicated an Intellectual Output to creating skills cards that use learning outcomes to describe 'what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process', as defined in the European Qualifications Framework (Cedefop 2008, 3). This process will enable us to corroborate national results and merge them into two harmonised skills cards that can also be checked against skills cards of related profiles.

### 4.2.6. Other considerations in the development of a training framework

The questions in Section 5 aimed to identify other components to a successful training programme for validators and facilitators.

| Training component | Number of answers | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Existence of published guidelines, handbooks, etc. | 13 | 86.7% |
| Adequate number of hours | 12 | 80% |
| Existence of experienced validators and facilitators as lecturers | 10 | 66.7% |
| Existence of some sort of recognition (certificate, diploma, etc.) | 10 | 66.7% |
| Existence of diversified materials for applications | 9 | 60% |
| Existence of multi-level training programs | 8 | 53.3% |
| Existence of professional trainers | 7 | 46.7% |
| Existence of a basic universally accepted curriculum | 4 | 26.7% |
| Other | 4 | 26.7% |

**Table 4.12.** Key components for a training program for facilitators and validators

The input gathered shows that most respondents expect the use of guidelines and handbooks in training, which is consistent with practice in German-speaking countries as described in the foregoing introduction. Nonetheless, respondents also call out for diversified materials, which underlines the idea that simplification is different for each text and goes beyond applying sets of rules universally. Similarly, the demand for trainers who are also practitioners may indicate that practical and experiential training is necessary to acquire the required skills — for example, in internships and discussions. These ideas are also found in the free-text responses:

> - "Practical application and exchange with other validators and facilitators."
> - "Good training materials in Easy-to-Read; varied methods, illustrative learning, practical learning, e.g., visit to a museum with a validation group, empowerment to become courageous!!!! And homework, so that the personal environment can help support and strengthen."

With regards to the training timeline, most respondents (7 out of 15, or 46.7%) rated 20-40 hours as an adequate duration for basic training for validators. Some of the respondents (4, or 26.7% of the responses) considered that a training programme should last 40 to 60 hours, while 2 respondents (or 13.3%) considered that less than 20 hours would be enough.

The free-text answers showed insecurities about being able to provide a suggestion — for example, "it is difficult to say"; "this should be an outcome of the study"; "it depends on how good trainers are"; "it depends on the learning outcomes"; "it depends on the flexibility of the curriculum and the personalisation possibilities"; "it depends if it includes an internship". Conversely, some respondents had a clear picture: one respondent suggested a training of 20-40 hours, distributed among 6 days, with trainees sitting an exam on the last day and receiving a certificate. Another respondent proposed a one-year timeline for a 60 hour training, and another one suggested combining a 20-40 hour training with an internship.

The hesitation in the responses and the fact that some respondents chose two ranges, for instance, "Less than 20 hours" and "20-40 hours", may corroborate the initial assumption that training in the field lacks harmonisation and is not institutionalised yet. Nonetheless, the input and ranges mentioned by the respondents provide T2V partners with helpful information that can be evaluated during the curriculum design — for instance, to include internships and rely on modularity.
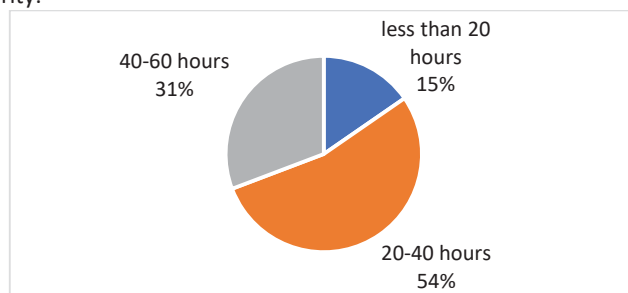


**Figure 4.14.** Length for a basic training for validators

The identified uncertainty regarding the basic training is also visible in the estimations for an advanced training programme. According to the majority of the answers received, the training for advanced validators should last either 20-40 hours or 40-60 hours, while none of the respondents believes that less than 20 hours would be enough. One respondent suggested 120 hours in an overall timeline of 2 years, while another respondent proposed a workload of more than 60 hours spread over a period of 1 to 2 years. This timeline of about 2 years could be linked to previous input that suggests the need for flexible curricula that allow trainees to set their own learning pace, and for combining theory with practice.
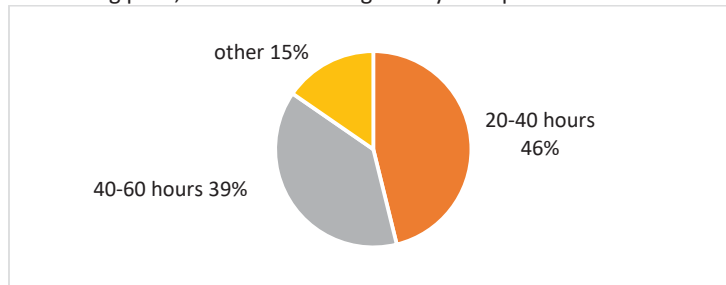


**Figure 4.15.** Length for an advanced training for validators

When asked about the ideal length of a training programme for facilitators, 8 respondents believe that it should consist of 40-60 hours, among which one suggested a training of 60 hours of training and a timeline of 6 months. 3 people chose 20-40 hours, and 1 less than 20 hours. As in the case of validators, there seems to be no agreement or established training curricula. Similarly, the idea of a longer timeline may suggest that the training should be combined with internships that include guided facilitations. This idea should be assessed across national responses to obtain more sustainable evidence.
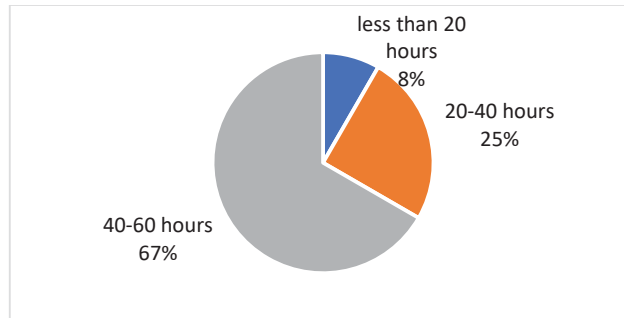


**Figure 4.16.** Length for a training for facilitators

In line with the previous questions, respondents were asked about their readiness to attend such training. The majority answered that they are very likely to enrol in a programme to become a certified validator/facilitator, while some of them are not sure. Only a small number are not interested: one respondent explained that he/she considers him/herself to be proficient enough, while another one explained that he/she is the CEO of an institution, but that this opportunity might be interesting for their employees.
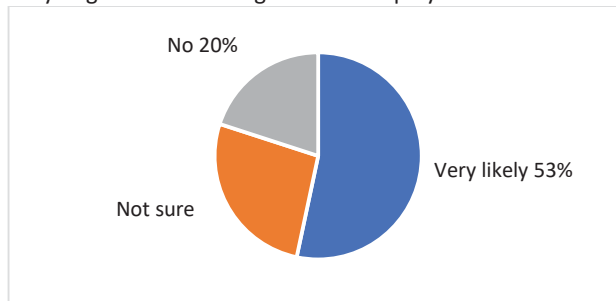


**Figure 4.17.** Likelihood of enrolment in a training for validators or facilitators

Finally, respondents were asked whether they would recommend such training programmes to other validators or facilitators. The majority of the respondents answered that they would very likely recommend it, while 4 people chose "likely". Only 1 respondent was not sure, and one person would not recommend it.
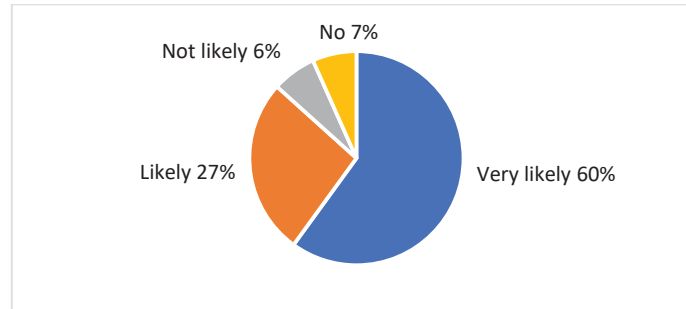
**Figure 4.18.** Likelihood of recommending such training programs to other validators or facilitators

These results are in line with the general results and underpin once again the need for the recognition of these two job roles and for professionalising training and certification.

## 4.3. Discussion

This chapter aimed at gathering data about the current situation of E2R experts, validators and facilitators, in German-speaking countries. While participatory validation of Easy-to-Read texts is a known profession among German-speaking countries and experts, the limited number of responses do not provide conclusive answers. The reasons behind this outcome can be manifold, from the lack of agreement among approaches to the tight deadlines for filling in the questionnaire.

Despite the limited number of respondents, the insights from the German questionnaire provide us with useful hints for the design of the curriculum — for instance, the data outline that the T2V curriculum should be open to prospective trainees with formal and non-formal learning backgrounds. A competence-based curriculum organised in modules could satisfy the demand for flexibility expressed by respondents. Accordingly, trainees who already have the necessary theoretical knowledge could spend more time in practical modules. Similarly, educational institutions that already have their own modules can select those that best complement their training. Additionally, the data from the German survey can be cross-referenced to the other data obtained and can contribute to delineating a clearer picture of the situation of E2R and the validation process in Europe, which was one of the objectives of the project.

## 4.4. Conclusions

The data obtained from the German version of the survey can contribute to define a general profile of the expert in E2R in German-speaking countries. The majority of respondents are young adults, mostly female and with a higher-education degree. They are also trained in E2R, for the most part within academical contexts and for more than 60 hours. They are familiar with different types of contents and activities related to E2R, with a preference for hands-on activities rather than with lectures. They are also interested in additional training in related fields, such as audio description in plain language, speech-to-text reporting, and user

experience. These suggestions are to be considered relevant for the Train2Validate project itself and its future application.

Another relevant fact emerging from the answers received is that the majority of respondents are not part of an association. This reflects the fact that associations in German-speaking countries mainly work for and with people with intellectual and/or sensorial disabilities. Nonetheless, the T2V project could also contribute to building a network of contacts with peer experts in the field and with end-users, which is something that some E2R-trained respondents claimed missing.

Additionally, respondents mainly work as freelancers and/or in a university or research institution, either as volunteers or on a part-time or a full-time basis. They are generally paid experts who dedicate more than 8 hours per week to E2R.

The data show respondents' hesitancy regarding the number of hours and the timeline for both training programmes. In the case of validators, the German results seem to point to basic training programmes with a workload between 20-40 and 40-60 hours. The suggested timelines range from six days to a year, with one respondent suggesting an internship.

The recommended workload for an advanced training for validators ranges from 20-40 to 40-60 hours, with one person proposing 120 hours in a timeline of 2 years, and another one mentioning a workload of over 60 hours in a period of 1 to 2 years. Similarly, the estimated training workload for facilitators seems to point to a maximum duration of 40-60 hours. Only one person suggested 60 hours of training with a timeline of 6 months.

It could be presumed that these longer timelines align with the suggestions for more practical exercises, the need for internships and peer learning, as well as for curricula that enable trainees to choose their own learning pace. A cross-comparison with the results in other languages should be carried out during the curriculum design to shed light on this topic.

Altogether, it can be assumed that German-speaking learners will expect diversified training materials, mainly hands-on ones, with collaborative activities that include peer-assessment and exchange with experts and end-users. For practical tasks, German-speaking trainees seem to envisage the use of additional materials, such as handbooks or guidelines. The need for other supporting guidelines or measurable decision criteria seems to arise also for tasks such as evaluating the feasibility of a validation job.

The use of E2R guidelines seems to be common among German-speaking experts, and they are probably expected to form part of the training. However, the data obtained in the German survey point to the fact that the skillsets of validators and facilitators go beyond having acquired knowledge about E2R simplification rules and that these skills need to be trained.

Knowing about professionals' training experience, learning epistemologies, and preferences regarding educational materials and activities has delivered the Train2Validate consortium with resourceful guidance for the next steps towards curriculum design and the realisation of the training materials. While the data collected from German-speaking experts is limited, it can now be cross-matched with the results from the other languages of the survey.

Similarly, a cross-national comparison should deliver a global overview of other topics that experts consider necessary in training programmes, such as knowledge about the Web Accessibility Guidelines, writing, adapting, and reviewing E2R texts.

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## 5. Training and employment in Italy.
## The reverse journey of a streetcar named T2V

Francesca BLEVE, Carlo EUGENI, Floriana SCIUMBATA

### 5.1. Introduction

Thanks to international projects like EASIT[1] and Train2Validate[2] (T2V), and the joint efforts of national associations for the rights of people with disabilities within the European forum of persons with an intellectual disability and their families Inclusion Europe (IE), Easy Language (EL) is slowly getting attention in several European countries, despite a lack of Easy-to-Understand (E2U) access services within the realm of audiovisual translation is all the more evident across the whole world (Bernabé and Orero 2019).

In this context, this paper seeks to analyze the current situation of EL and Easy-to-Read (E2R) texts and knowledge in Italy, thanks to two specific sources: a survey aiming at knowing more about the existing trainings for validators and facilitators of E2R texts in Italy sent to members of Italian organizations and companies that publish and/or use E2R texts; and an interview with one of the major experts of E2R in Italy, Maria Cristina Schiratti, acting as IE Secretary General and ANFFAS[3] council member.

To do so, section 5.2 will examine the existing literature related to EL; section 5.3 will try to make an overview of the status of EL in Italy; section 5.4 will illustrate the most significant answers collected with the survey to better understand how facilitators and validators work in Italy; and section 5.5 will try to draw some preliminary conclusions, by following a similar structure to that of X.4, with the aim of discussing the results in the light of the interview with Schiratti[4]. This will provide an interesting perspective of how Italian stakeholders create and validate E2R texts. In particular, results show that the job of validators and facilitators of E2R texts in Italy follows a reverse journey: from the production of training materials to the profession being recognized as such; the opposite of similar Erasmus+ projects, which provide training materials for commonly recognized professions.

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[1] See https://transmediacatalonia.uab.cat/easit/ [last access 30 June 2021]
[2] See https://plenainclusionmadrid.org/train2validate/ [last access 30 June 2021]
[3] ANFFAS is the Italian National Association of People with Intellectual Disabilities. For more information, see http://www.anffas.net/ [last access 30 September 2021]
[4] See https://plenainclusionmadrid.org/train2validate/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2021/09/Annex_15_Schiratti.pdf [last access 30 November 2021]

## 5.2. Literature review

When the 2006 UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was ratified by the European Union in 2010, the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions advocated for academic contributions, by specifying that "Easy-to-read publishing should have a solid scientific foundation and be able to learn from new research findings"[5]. Despite EL is part of the broader concept of Accessibility, where it contributes to many fields like Audiovisual Translation (Perego 2020), Translation Studies (Richart-Marset and Calamita 2020) and Linguistics (Sciumbata 2020), studies in this field are still scarce, especially in Italy.

The lack of research on E2R in Italy derives, among other reasons, from a lack of a clear distinction between Easy Language and Plain Language. According to Perego, "for nonexperts, it is still easy to mix the two language variants because both aim at text understandability and intelligibility, […] and it is sometimes easier to spot similarities rather than differences between the two modalities" (PEREGO, 2020: 234). As a matter of fact, most of the studies published concern how to simplify legal and administrative language and institutional texts using Plain Language (Lucarelli 2001; Cortelazzo and Pellegrino 1999-2004; Raso 2003; Eugeni, Rotz and Checcarelli 2018; Vellutino 2018) or other simplification forms (De Mauro 1987; Piemontese 1996; Fioritto 1997; De Mauro and Vedovelli 1999; Fortis 2003; Orletti, Dell'Orletta and Iovino 2016). In particular, these techniques are "used mainly in specialized fields, such as the bureaucratic, administrative or legal fields, with the purpose of simplifying sectorial lexicon to make the documents comprehensible to the greatest number of people" (Perego 2020: 236). Because of this ambiguity research and publications specifically on Easy Italian are lacking, except for very recent contributions (Sciumbata 2020). Besides this, "in academia, […] in terms of implementation, E2U is normally applied to other (under-researched) material, including didactic material" (Perego 2020: 247). Moreover, the importance of examining this field in depth would allow for providing empirical support for guidelines that are designed for end users affected by several kinds of disabilities (*ibidem*).

On the contrary, from a practical point of view, Italy is in fact showing a growing interest in E2R. For instance, ANFFAS, the Italian association of families of people with intellectual and/or relational disabilities, uses the Italian version of IE *Information for all - European standards for making information easy to read and understand,* to produce various types of texts. A collaboration between similar associations and research centres like the partners of international projects like EASIT and T2V will be capable of paving the way to a growing academic involvement and future scientific research.

At an international level, one of the most recent and original publications concerning Easy-to-Read is a doctoral thesis on Easy-to-Read audiovisual content, *Easy audiovisual content for all: Easy-to-Read as an enabler of easy, multimode access services* (BERNABÉ CARO, 2020), which have given rise to similar publications on E2R and E2U in the field of Audiovisual Translation in general, and in particular of subtitling (Bernabé-Caro and Rot 2017; Bernabé-Caro and Cavallo 2021; Bernabé-Caro 2020; Bernabé-Caro, Matamala and Hernández-Garrido 2021).

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[5] See https://www.ifla.org/files/assets/hq/publications/professional-report/120.pdf [last access July 2021].

### 5.3. Linguistic remarks

In Italy, E2R texts in Easy Italian refer to the European guidelines that set the European standards, shared by all the countries who took part in the Pathways projects[6]. These standards are available for several languages and are written in E2R language themselves, in line with what they promote. The *Information for All* booklet (INCLUSION EUROPE, 2011) also stresses the importance of involving people with intellectual disabilities in the planning, writing, and/or proofreading processes[7].

However, overall, textual and linguistic indications in the European guidelines are vague and limited from both a qualitative and a quantitative point of view, and they may prove insufficient to write a highly readable and standardized text (SCIUMBATA 2021). Indeed, out of the 60 recommendations scattered in the first two sections of *Information for All* (Inclusion Europe 2011), only about half of them[8] are dedicated to textual, syntactical, or lexical features, the remaining guidelines being dedicated to other features, such as pictures, font choice and size, margins, layout, or format (Sciumbata 2021). Yet, if a text is poorly written from a linguistic point of view, other features might become useless.

Furthermore, these European guidelines often show a lack of objectivity. For example, when they recommend "short sentences" or choosing "easy words", how "short" should a sentence be? How can one identify an easy word and where can easy words be found? The same oddities were reported for most E2R guidelines (Sutherland and Isherwood 2006; Fajardo *et al*. 2014). In particular, in E2R guidelines in general "there is a lack of clarity within the guidelines regarding the hierarchy of recommendations and the impact that following or not following certain recommendations would have on accessibility" (Sutherland and Isherwood 2006). In addition, the European guidelines were designed without a specific language in mind, which implies that specific features of a language might have not been taken into account. For example, although the Italian version of the European guidelines – *Informazioni per tutti* – contains a section called "*Linee guida per la lingua italiana*" (lit. Guidelines for the Italian language), it only mentions Roman numerals (that should be avoided), extended date formats (that should be preferred to shortened ones), and only shortly recommends using certain verb modes and tenses[9], without providing further guidance based on textual, morphological, syntactical, or lexical traits of the Italian language.

To bridge this gap, a new set of guidelines specifically designed for the Italian language was proposed (Sciumbata 2020)[10]. On top of incorporating and expanding the European standards, the new guidelines focus on the linguistic features of writing in Easy

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[6] More information on Pathways is available at https://www.inclusion-europe.eu/pathways-2/ (last access: 17/8/2021).

[7] See the booklet *Do not write for us without us! Involving people with intellectual disabilities in the writing of easy-to-read texts* (2011) addresses the same topic.

[8] Some recommendations are repeated twice or quite similar. For example, "Use easy to understand words that people will know well" (Inclusion Europe 2011: §1.10) and "Do not use difficult words" (§2.11; "Always keep your sentences short" (§1.14) and "Keep your sentences short" (2011: §2.19).

[9] The same indications are shared among the language-specific section of the guidelines for several languages, including English.

[10] A handbook to write E2R texts in Italian according to the new guidelines will be published by the same author at the beginning of 2022.

Italian. They are based on the literature regarding Plain Language[11], and other models for simple writing; but also on studies on reading comprehension and difficulties caused by specific syntactical structures or morphological features, with a focus on readers with special needs. All new standards are based on three 'golden' principles:

- Make everything as explicit as possible.
- Always go for the easiest alternative.
- Put yourself in the readers' shoes.
    Some new recommendations, not mentioned in the European guidelines, include:
- When rewriting a text, use the source text as an 'idea' of the topic rather than as the source text of a faithful 'translation', as not depending on the source text reduces the risk of transferring its flaws in its E2R version.
- Limit sentence length to 10-15 words by using simple sentences (without subordinate clauses) and linear clauses.
- Use conjunctions and linkers to make logical connections between ideas clear and to avoid less common syntactical structures.
- Avoid implicit, ambiguous, or impersonal structures.
- Do not be afraid of using expressions or syntactical structures that are accepted in the spoken language but might break grammar rules of the written language.
- Refer to the Basic Vocabulary of Italian[12] (De Mauro 1997; De Mauro 2016) to find easy and commonly used words.[13]

These new guidelines were applied to write five test texts (Sciumbata 2020: 292-363), written by a linguist with an expertise in simplified writing. The texts were then validated by five different groups of people with intellectual disabilities, who only proposed minor corrections, like a synonym, different line breaks, or changing punctuation. The results of this experiment suggest that detailed standards, as well as a strong background in simplification, writing, and linguistics, can help writing effective texts that generally suit an audience with intellectual disabilities (*ibidem*). This is in contrast with what is the ideal scenario envisaged by Schiratti[14], who claims that only people with intellectual disabilities can write E2R texts, as they are the only ones who can understand what better suits them. With the creation of professionally recognized figures in the field of validation and more detailed guidelines like the ones just mentioned, we believe such dispute will be overcome: people without disabilities would, indeed, write texts to be validated by the target readers.

## 5.4. Data collection and analysis
In this section, a selection of the data obtained from the survey distributed among the Italian stakeholders will be proposed and then analyzed. Before going into detail, it is important to stress that the survey was sent to selected respondents only, mainly those partners that had

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[11] See Sciumbata (2021) for a comparison between E2R and Plain Language in Italy.
[12] The *Vocabolario di Base della Lingua Italiana* (Basic Vocabulary of Italian) is a list of around 7,500 most used Italian words that are supposed to be familiar to most native speakers.
[13] Eugeni (2008) proposed a similar approach for the creation of subtitles for the deaf and the hard of hearing in Italian.
[14] See section 5 below.

already collaborated with the EASIT project, designed to achieve, among others, the goal of creating training materials for writers of E2R texts and E2R translators[15].

This survey consists of 5 sections. The first section of the survey was aimed at gathering information about the demographic profile of the respondents. To begin with, the Italian survey has collected a total of 41 answers. All respondents live in Italy and the mother tongue of 40 of them is Italian, while that of the remaining one is Spanish. Among the participants who completed the survey, 33 are women and 8 are men. Two respondents reported they had a stroke and were left with aphasia, and that they use Easy-to-Read language to access all types of content.

The second section of the survey contained questions about the general education and training of the respondents. The answers obtained in the second section show that all participants have many years of education. Specifically, 26.8% hold an undergraduate academic degree, 31.7% hold a master's degree or similar degree, and 19.5% hold a PhD or similar degree. The remaining 22% of participants have either completed secondary education or have completed vocational courses.

As for the third section, it strictly concerned education and training in E2R. Results show that E2R education is not widespread. Indeed, results show that only 5 respondents received training into E2R language. In particular, 2 attended a course as part of their university studies; 3 had vocational training, as workshops, in-house training, or self-teaching; and only 3 of them received handbooks as training material. Of these 5 respondents who received academic or vocational training into E2R, 2 specified they would have liked to be trained in audio description; and 1 reported they would have liked to learn how to turn digital content into E2R content. In the box dedicated to further information, the participants who reported they had a stroke specified they were not familiar with any kind of E2R content before having the stroke.

The fourth section included questions about the current activity of the participants in the survey and their actual or potential work in E2R. The information collected through this set of answers are diversified. Starting from the section concerning the current work of respondents, they reported to work either at the university, or in a research centre, or in a not-for-profit organization.

However, none of them works full time as an expert in E2R content as 2 work as volunteers and 4 as part-time experts. Concerning payment (see Figure 1), E2R is not the main source of income of any of the respondents (in blue below); only 2 of them are paid, though E2R is not the main source of income as their income mainly comes from another profession (in red below); and the remaining 4 respondents are not paid at all (in yellow below).

The last finding worth a mention in this section concerns 12 participants who reported to collaborate with or work for associations for people with disabilities, be they intellectual, sensory, age-related, or reading-related.

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[15] For more details see https://pagines.uab.cat/easit/en [last accessed 30 June 2021].
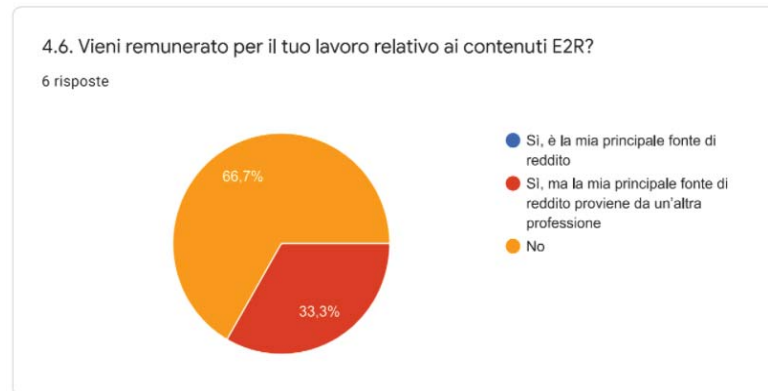
**Figure 5.1.** Chart related to the income of the participants who work as E2R experts.

Sections 4.1 and 4.2 of the survey offered a very insightful perspective on the profession of validators and facilitators respectively: none of the respondents work as a validator of E2R content; and only one participant reported they are a trained facilitator. On top of this, the trained facilitator has designed, written, and translated E2R content and have facilitated between 5 and 10 validation projects, in cooperation with a group of validators. This only facilitator specified that they use dedicated software and reference work during validation sessions, as well as a beamer to show validators the text to work on.

The fifth section of the survey shows that all participants agree on the skills and competences professional validators and facilitators should possess, despite their different backgrounds. These questions gave participants the opportunity to select multiple answers. The questions of this section were related to the following aspects:

- type of knowledge and skills professional validators should possess: 68.3% of participants agree that writing skills, including punctuation and spelling, are the most important skills they should possess; followed by global Easy-to-Read history, guidelines, and target groups (65.9%); Easy-to-Read principles, guidelines, recommendations, and standards (63.4%); reading skills (56.1%), active listening skills (56.1%), vocal and communication skills (51.2%), multimodality, including moving images, pictures, tone of voice, noises, background music, etc. (51.2%); and finally computer skills, including dedicated software and new technologies (51.2%);

- what a validator or facilitator should work on during the validation process: according to participants validators should check, first of all, if the E2R text is grammatically correct, words are properly chosen and spelt, and punctuation is correct (70.7%); then if the E2R text is clear, accurate, natural, and consistent (70.7%); and, finally, if multimodality is well used (63.4%) (see Figure 2).
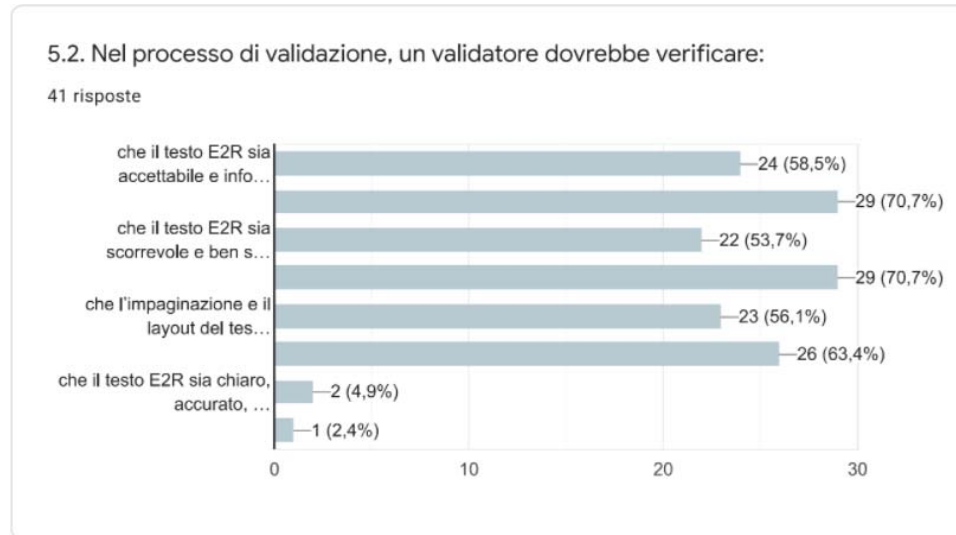
**Figure 5.2.** Answers related to what a validator should work on during validation.

As for facilitators, the first thing they should do according to participants is getting to know target groups, as well as their disabilities, needs, perception, and cognitive processing (90.2%), followed by a global Easy-to-Read knowledge (68.3%), familiarity with basic communication and mediation principles (63.4%), and basic validation skills and strategies (61%);

- what the key components of a successful training program for validators and facilitators should be: the key components selected by participants were the existence of a basic universally accepted curriculum (80.5%), the existence of experienced validators and facilitators as lecturers (70.7%), the existence of published guidelines, handbooks, and other similar training materials (61%), existence of diversified materials for applications (56.1%), and finally, the existence of some sort of recognition as a certificate or diploma (46.3%);

- how many hours a training program for facilitators and/or validator should consist of: according to participants, a basic training program for validator should consist of 40-60 hours (34.1%), 20-40 hours (34.1%) or less than 20 hours (24.4%), whilst an advanced training program for specialized validators should consist of 40-60 hours (51.2%) or 20-40 hours (29.3%). Similarly, facilitators should follow a training program consisting of 40-60 hours (43.9%) or 20-40 hours (34.1%).

Overall, a training program for validators and facilitators is a topic that participants have particularly as they recognize little is done in this field. However, despite such an interest for a program to train facilitators and validators, data show that 7 would not enroll a program to become a certified validator or facilitator, no matter its nature (academic or professional), though 17 participants would enroll such a program, and 22 would recommend it to their peers.

## 5.5. Discussion and conclusions

This paper tries to illustrate the status of facilitators and validators in Italy by means of two main sources of information: data collected in Italy in the framework of a survey conducted in several European countries about Easy-to-Read language in general, and, in particular, on the professional figures of the validator and of the facilitator of texts written in Easy Italian; and an interview to one of the main experts of Easy Italian (see below in this section).

Data concerning the demographic profile of participants based in Italy confirm what has also been pointed out by other partners during the first Train2Validate Multiplier Event[16], as reported in the other articles of this book: highly educated women are predominating in the Easy-to-Read world. Specific to Italy is the fact that E2R is not really spread in Italy and that facilitation and validation are not socially recognized professional figures. In fact, none of the respondents to this survey reported to work as full-time paid professional validators or facilitators, and only two of them – the ones respondents who were affected by aphasia – reported to use E2R language to access contents. This is confirmed by answers obtained in sections 4.1 and 4.2 as illustrated above.

What we can derive from the third section of the survey is that training in Easy-to-Read is not common in Italy and is not part of a certified course. Moreover, despite 12 participants collaborate with or work for organizations engaged with people with disabilities, only 2 of them are paid for their work though their main income comes from other professional activities. This confirms what mentioned above: the professions of validators and facilitators are not recognized as fully-fledged professions. The last section of the survey shows that only few participants would enroll a training to become a certified validator or facilitator, despite a general interest in an official training as reported in other answers by some of the participants. Such apparently contradictory feedback is also reported elsewhere in the survey: a participant said they were not likely to enroll or recommend the program to a peer, but nonetheless insisted on the importance of disseminating the topic in universities and creating a basic training program.

The survey failed to provide a thorough picture of validation and facilitation in Italy. For this reason, extra feedback about the profession of validators and facilitators was provided by an interview to Maria Cristina Schiratti, expert in the field, ANFFAS council member, and secretary general of Inclusion Europe. Schiratti explains that the first thing facilitators and validators must do is to learn guidelines, in line with Sciumbata's findings (see §3 above). At the same time, she clearly states that E2R texts can only be written by people with disabilities, who are the only ones capable of writing texts that do not contain the big flaws they normally contain, and which make the validation process tedious. This not only openly contradicts Sciumbata's findings above; it also drastically limits the number of possible E2R writers to those people with intellectual disabilities that also have enough linguistic competence to write or rewrite E2R texts. The T2V project on E2R facilitators and validators can be the solution: with certified trained validators and facilitators and detailed

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[16] The first event of the T2V project took place on May 26th, 2021. The title of the event was "*The status of training programs for validators and facilitators in Europe*", and was organized by the Polytechnic University of Timisoara and the other consortium partners. For details see https://plenainclusionmadrid.org/train2validate/evento1/ (last access, October 2021).

guidelines, there is no longer the need to limit the number of E2R text writers or rewriters to people with intellectual disabilities, who can then concentrate on the validation process. By doing this, professional writers, assisted by a professional validation team, can produce more E2R texts, that Schiratti admits are still too scarce.

Concerning the skills facilitators and validators should possess, Schiratti confirms what has also emerged elsewhere in the survey: facilitators must have the ability to interact with people affected by different types of disability. In particular, Schiratti is convinced that facilitators can only help validators identifying contents, finding information, and eventually structuring or restructuring the final text. This is perfectly in line with the aims of the T2V project and with what is emerging as the possible way forward: linguists writing or rewriting E2R texts and a validation team composed of professional facilitators and validators with an intellectual disability having the last word on the final version of the text. Expanding on this, Schiratti recommends that the validation team should be composed of people with different kinds of intellectual disabilities and with different backgrounds. This allows to tackle another big challenge: text types. Because text types are many, and the number of experts in the field is still limited, a heterogeneous group of validators is needed to be able and validate all types of texts from as many perspectives as possible.

A last interesting aspect to discuss is the notion of translating an existing text. Though this is not strictly related to the T2V project, it provides food for thought when looking at the bigger picture of producing an E2R text, consisting of a (re)writing phase and a validation phase. Translation, today, is no longer considered as the word-for-word rendition of a source text, but rather as communicating the meaning of a text by means of equivalents in a target language (Munday 2012). More recently, a new approach to translation has been spreading, especially thanks to the videogame industry: transcreation. Like any other form of translation, transcreation is aimed at producing a text for a target audience in a target language. However, because the target audience has very specific needs due to the most various reasons (different culture, disability, different use, etc.), the target text can show important differences with the source text, especially if this is multimodal (Pedersen 2019). Because Sciumbata proposes that the text one is translating is only to be seen as "an 'idea' on the topic, rather than as a source text of a faithful 'translation'" – as "not depending on the source text limits the risk of transferring its flaws in its E2R translation" – the more current notion of transcreation, or "adaptational translation" (Gottlieb 2017), can be considered as the approach to follow in the production of E2R texts, thus overcoming the traditional binary opposition between writing and translating E2R texts. This will then lead to a smoother validation phase, which avoids the issues validators reportedly complain about.

To conclude, the answers obtained through the T2V survey and those provided by Schiratti show that, in Italy, the emerging field of Easy-to-Read is still largely unknown. This is due to several factors, the first of which being the lack of a social and professional recognition of the professions producing E2R texts. This entails several consequences, such as people working in this field generally being volunteers, lack of scientific research in the field, and scarce production of E2R texts. We believe that the T2V project can overcome this situation by providing a well-defined workflow in the production of E2R texts, a curriculum for the training of E2R validators and facilitators, and a certification that can further boost the social and professional recognition of all the figures that work to produce E2R texts.

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# 6. The educational background and training priorities of validators and facilitators in Romania

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## 6.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the results of a survey conducted in Romania, within the European Erasmus+ project TRAIN2VALIDATE "Professional training for easy-to-read facilitators and validators", detailed in Chapter 1 of this book (García Muñoz 2022). Part of the Intellectual Output 1 (IO1) of the project, the survey aimed at understanding more about the status and needs of easy-to-read (E2R) validators and facilitators across Europe. The research team, methodology and workflow used to meet this aim are presented in Chapter 2 of this book (Dejica, Şimon, Fărcaşiu and Kilyeni 2022a) and will not be detailed here. The educational background and training priorities of validators and facilitators in Romania completes the individual research results obtained by the other project partners, which are representative for the countries and languages in which the survey was conducted, i.e., Germany (Bernabé Caro and Cavallo 2022), Italy (Bleve, Eugeni and Sciumbata 2022), Slovenia (Knapp 2022), Spain (García Muñoz and Bernabé Caro 2022) and English (Cotoară 2022), and are altogether presented and analysed in a holistic manner in the final chapter of this book (Dejica, Şimon, Fărcaşiu and Kilyeni 2022b) and in the TRAIN2VALIDATE Report (Dejica, Şimon, Fărcaşiu and Kilyeni 2021).

## 6.2. Corpus size and description

The corpus we used for analysis consists of the results collected from 48 surveys completed by 40 different procurers in Romania (writers, publishing houses, NGOs or organisations that publish E2R and validation content). The list of Romanian procurers is presented in Chapter 2, Annex 1 (Dejica, Şimon, Fărcaşiu and Kilyeni 2022a) of this book, and is the result of the joint contribution of the two Romanian partners in the TRAIN2VALIDATE project (Dejica, Şimon, Fărcaşiu and Kilyeni 2021), namely Universitatea Politehnica Timişoara and Fundaţia Professional. The communication with the procurers was carried out in Romanian, which is also the language of the survey. The Romanian version of the multilingual survey was available for completion on the project website, with the other English, German, Italian, Slovenian and Spanish versions.

## 6.3. Research results and analysis

The presentation of the research results representative for the educational background and training priorities of validators and facilitators in Romania follows the structure and

description of the survey, detailed in Chapter 2 (Dejica, Șimon, Fărcașiu and Kilyeni 2022a) of this book. Even if validation and facilitation are in an incipient stage in Romania, we believe that the results of the 48 Romanian surveys we gathered and used for analysis represent an appropriate sample size for quantitative analysis (Wisdom and Creswell 2013; Creswell 2014), and are relevant for the overall purpose of the TRAIN2VALIDATE project (García Muñoz 2022). The data was collected using Google forms, which is also the app we used for the graphic representation of the survey results. For the purpose of this chapter, we translated the Romanian graphs and the comments of the respondents into English. The subsequent representation and analysis of the results in this chapter is based on this data.

### 6.3.1. Demographic profile

The majority of the people who took the survey live in Romania (97.9%). The mother tongue for most of them (83.3%) is Romanian; the remaining 16.7% represent cases of bilingualism, as the respondents declared other mother tongues as well, including German or Hungarian. The age of almost half of the participants in the survey (45.8%) ranges between 41 and 50 years, which is an indicator that they have some 20 years of experience in one or several fields. Almost 33% of the respondents are also experienced professionals, as 20.8% range between 51 and 60 years of age, while 12.5% are 61 or older. The others are relatively young: 10.4% between 20 and 30, and the same percentage between 31 and 40. Of the 48 persons who took the survey, 72.9% are women, while 27.1% are men.

### 6.3.2. General education and training

The majority of the respondents (91.7%) reported holding a degree (Image 6.1.), of which 27.1% an undergraduate degree, 47.9% a graduate degree, and 16.7% a PhD degree. This not only points to the professionalism of the respondents but is also an indicator of literacy. Most of the respondents continually improve their skills in varied and multiple ways, as they participated in conferences and workshops (32 answers received, representing 66.7% of the respondents), they did research (15 answers, 31.3%), and they communicated with other experts (28 answers, 58.3%) or with other users (24 answers, 50%).
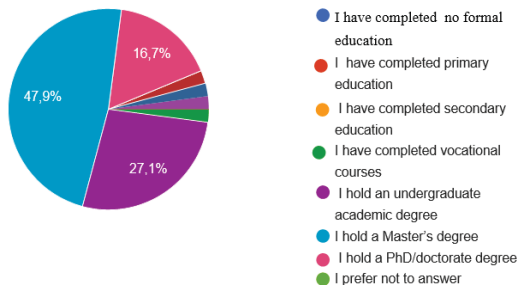


**Image 6.1.** Level of education of respondents

### 6.3.3. Education and training in E2R

The results we obtained from this section reveal that most of the participants in the survey did not receive any training related to E2R, which is an indicator that this practice is new and/or underdeveloped in Romania. Thus, 83.3% did not receive any training, while only 16.7% of the respondents declared that they received some training related to E2R content, which included attending workshops (2 respondents), attending university courses (4) or doing an internship (3). Those who declared having received some training, also reported being familiar with various forms of E2R content, including printed, digital, audio, or audiovisual content (8 answers). The training they received was both general (25%) and specific (62.5%), and focused on creating / writing E2R texts, adapting / editing / translating texts into E2R texts, validating E2R texts with end users, proofreading / revising E2R texts, and using dedicated software and hardware. 12.5% of the respondents declared that they would have liked to receive more training related to the use of audiovisual content. The activities which they found most useful in the training process includes lectures, practical proofreading / revision exercises, validation / revision / quality control, analysing existing E2R content, and working with other experts. None of the people who took the survey received any handbooks for training. Half of the respondents reported having been trained for less than 20 hours, 37.5% from 20 to 40 hours, and 12.5% from 40 to 60 hours.

### 6.3.4. Current activity

The questions in the current activity section showed that most of them (28, representing 58.3% of the 38 respondents) work in a public institution. The second and the third largest categories consist of respondents who work in a non-profit organization (22.9%) and in universities or research institutions (14.6%). Last but not least, 8.3% of the respondents declared that they work as freelancers.

Question 4.2. revealed that many respondents (72.9% of the 48 who answered) did not collaborate with or were not a member in any association (Image 6.2.). Similarly, question 4.3 showed that 52.1% of the respondents had never collaborated with an association on the topic of E2R content. Those who did collaborate with associations on this topic, mentioned associations dealing with intellectual disabilities, reading-related disabilities, sensory disabilities, or age-related disabilities.

4.2. Do you collaborate with or are you a member of an association?

48 answers
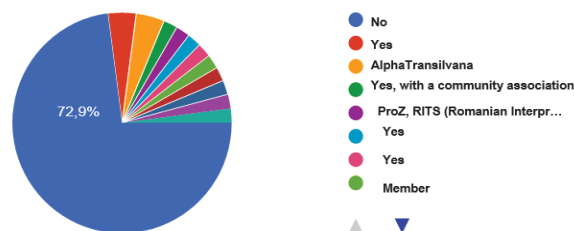


**Image 6.2.** Collaboration with associations

4.4 If you worked in another profession before you became an expert in easy-to-read content, please tell us which one:

48 answers



Legend:
- I was a journalist or writer
- I was a teacher
- I was a researcher
- I was a social worker
- I was a translator/ audiovisual tran…
- I did not work in another profession
- Member of a foundation/association
- Cook helper
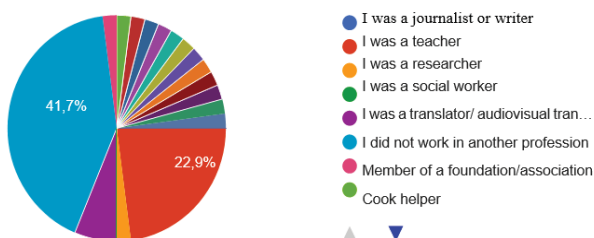
**Image 6.3.** Previous professions of E2R experts

Before becoming an expert in E2R content, 41.7% of the respondents declared that they did not work in any other profession and 22.9% declared that they worked as a teacher. Other occupations which were mentioned include those associated with writers, journalists, researchers, social workers, or translators. Working as an expert in E2R content is done on a volunteer basis for most of the respondents (70.8%) and is not paid (75%).

More than half of the respondents (52.1%) declared that they had been working on E2R content for less than a year, 14.6% for a period between 1 and 5 years, and 33.3% for more than 5 years. Similarly, 54.2% declared that they worked with E2R content less than an hour per week, 29.2% between 1 and 8 hours, and 16.7% for more than 8 hours. The languages in which they work are Romanian, English and Hungarian.

### 6.3.4.1. Validators

Of the 8 answers we received in the validation section of the survey, 7 participants declared that they were not trained validators and 6 that they had never worked on validation projects. Those who did work on such projects declared that, in most of the cases, they worked mainly in a team, and that the team members consisted of other validators and / or facilitators. The validation activity usually consisted of sessions which lasted less than two hours (62.5%) or between 2 and 3 hours (37.5%). When validating E2R content, 62.5% of the respondents always used guidelines, while 37.5% used such materials only sometimes. These guidelines are Romanian (62.5%) or European (37.5%).

### 6.3.4.2. Facilitators

Similarly to validators, 3 of the 5 answers we obtained from respondents in the facilitation section of the survey revealed that they were not trained facilitators. The two persons who worked as a facilitator declared that they had previously taken other roles related to E2R, such as E2R writer, translator, or researcher. While being a facilitator, the respondents declared that they were also filling other positions which involved activities such as reviewing, producing or translating E2R content, doing research or giving lectures. In most of the cases (60%), the respondents facilitated one validation project, 20% facilitated from 1 to 5 projects, and the remaining 20%, 5 to 10 projects. The answers to question 4.2.5. of the survey are balanced and show that, when they assess the feasibility of a validation project,

facilitators usually communicate with validators or other facilitators before taking a decision; only sometimes the assessment is done on their own experience. The size of the validation team usually ranges from 2 to 4 persons (60%), and sometimes is less than 2 (40%). The validation team is usually set up by the employer or by the facilitator himself/herself. The survey answers show that there are several ways in which facilitators communicate with E2R writers once the validation is completed, namely by phone, in writing or face-to-face. In some cases (40%), facilitators receive an updated version from E2R writers for validation, but there are cases as well (60%) in which facilitators do not receive any feedback from writers. Next, if they do receive an updated version of the document, 60% of facilitators usually check personally to see if any changes were made to the document, while 40% send it back to the validator for conformity. The tools which facilitators use to organize sessions include traditional or computer-based management tools, video-conferencing systems and web-based platforms.

### 6.3.5. Skills

Section 5 of the survey was rich in answers and offers an image of the expectations of the respondents concerning the skills and knowledge validators and facilitators should have.

Thus, the 48 respondents declared that to validate good quality E2R content, a validator should have skills for working in a team (68.8%), reading skills (66.7%), vocal and communication skills (64.6%), global E2R knowledge (56.3%), computer skills (50%), and genre knowledge (37.5%). The respondents consider that, in the process of validation, a validator should check if the E2R text is clear, accurate, natural and consistent (81.3% of the total number of 48 answers given), if the E2R text is fluent, well organized and structured (75%), if the E2R text is acceptable and informative enough (75%), if the E2R text is grammatically correct, words are properly chosen and spelt, and punctuation is correct (52.1%), if the E2R text design and layout are correct (52.1%), and if multimodality is well used (47.9%).

Respondents believe that facilitators should have knowledge and skills which they should use in the validation process, for instance being familiar with basic communication and mediation principles (75%), organizational skills, including working in teams (75%), knowledge and skills related to target groups: types of disabilities, needs, perception and cognitive processing (72.9%), basic validation skills and strategies to develop validations (54.2%), global E2R knowledge: history, guidelines, target groups (52.1%), and multimodality, including the role of paratextual information (43.8%).

Respondents consider that a successful training program for validators and facilitators should include key components, such as the existence of professional trainers (83.3%), published guidelines and handbooks (72.9%), various materials for applications (68.8%), an adequate number of hours (68.9%) and the existence of multi-level training programs (68.8%). The opinion of the respondents (48 answers) concerning the number of hours needed to set up training programs for validators, specialised validators and facilitators is presented in Table 6.1.

The majority of the respondents (89.9%) declared that they would need better skills and knowledge for validation and facilitation activities, that they would likely (31.3%) and very likely (31.3%) enrol in a program to become a certified validator / facilitator, and that

they would likely (58.3%) and very likely (37.5%) recommend such training programs to their peers.

| No. of hours / training program | Validators | Specialised validators | Facilitators |
|---|---|---|---|
| Less than 20 hours | 20.8% | 18.8% | 18.8% |
| 20-40 hours | 52.1% | 33.3% | 43.8% |
| 40-60 hours | 27.1% | 47.9% | 37.5% |

**Table 6.1.** Length of training programs for validators and facilitators

## 6.4. Conclusions

The aim of this chapter was to present the current status of the educational background and training of validators and facilitators of E2R content in Romania. The results of the 48 surveys we obtained from 40 different Romanian procurers (writers, publishing houses, NGOs or organisations that publish E2R and validation content) allowed us to draw their profile in terms of demographics, general education and training, education and training in E2R, their current activity as validators or facilitators, and skills. The results show that that most of the respondents are relatively young (41-50 years), most of them are women (72.9%), and educated (91.7% hold a degree). Most of the respondents did not receive any training related to E2R, which confirms the fact that this practice is new and/or underdeveloped in Romania. Those who were trained, reported that they were familiar with various forms of E2R content, including printed, digital, audio, or audiovisual content. Regarding their current activity, most of the people involved in E2R work in public institutions and non-profit organizations, which stands proof of the social involvement and responsibility of the state and public sectors. To our surprise, the majority of the respondents reported not having collaborated or not being member of any association, a gap which in our opinion, is counterproductive to the development of any professional activity. Those who collaborated with associations involved in E2R, mentioned associations dealing with intellectual disabilities, reading-related disabilities, sensory disabilities, or age-related disabilities. Before working with E2R content, most of the respondents worked in social and humanist areas as teachers, writers, journalists, translators, researchers, or social workers. Another indicator of the incipient stage of the development of E2R in Romania is the fact that more than half of the respondents declared that they had been working with E2R content for less than a year and less than an hour per week. The current state of the professional development of E2R specialists is in the same line, as most of the respondents declared that they were not trained validators or facilitators. Overall, they stated that they would need better skills for the validation and facilitation of E2R content and expressed their interest in participating in training courses and becoming certified professionals.

We believe that the results we obtained and presented in this chapter are realistic and comprehensive for the image and professional status of validators and facilitators in Romania, respond to the needs and objectives of the TRAIN2VALIDATE project (García Muñoz 2022), and together with the results obtained from Germany, Italy, Slovenia and Spain, will

offer a sound basis for the development of skills and knowledge needed for the professionalization of E2R validators and facilitators.

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### Webography

Easy-to-read survey for facilitators and validators
https://plenainclusionmadrid.org/train2validate/survey/
Train2Validate project, "Professional training for easy-to-read facilitators and validators"
https://plenainclusionmadrid.org/train2validate/
Train2Validate project partners https://plenainclusionmadrid.org/train2validate/partners/

# 7. Training experience, challenges and expectations of validators and facilitators in Slovenia

Tatjana KNAPP

## 7.1. Introduction

The most recent research and development in the field of Easy-to-read (E2R) in Slovenia has shown that interest in E2R in Slovene language or Easy Slovene is steadily increasing in the country. It is particularly encouraging that the issue has received considerable attention from many governmental and non-governmental organizations for people with cognitive disabilities (e.g., intellectual disability) and sensory disabilities that have started to adopt E2R as one of the standards in service provision (Knapp and Haramija 2021). For example, two separate surveys on E2R, one for general public and one aimed toward target groups of E2R, were conducted as a part of an Erasmus+ project, Promoting Easy-to-Read Language for Social Inclusion (PERLSI), which brings together researchers and practitioners from Latvia, Lithuania, and Slovenia. The response in Slovenia showed that both, the general public and the end-users of E2R (the target groups), recognize the importance of accessible and clear communication for the society as a whole. The end-users were asked whether they found E2R information useful; good 70% said they found E2R to be very useful, good 23% said maybe useful, good 4% were uncertain and less than 2% proved unconvinced regards the usefulness of E2R (Knapp 2021). However, production and publication of E2R materials in Slovenia does not meet the increasing demand.

A crucial part of production and publication of E2R information is validation, a process that assesses comprehension of the E2R materials. The main process carriers of this stage are the validators, E2R end-users, and facilitators, who facilitate the validation. In Slovenia, validators have traditionally been people with cognitive disabilities, such as intellectual disability, but the guidelines for E2R in Slovene language promote inclusion of other target groups, such as elderly, language learners, etc., to take on the professional role of validators (Haramija and Knapp 2019).

During the first stage of project Professional training for easy-to-read facilitators and validators (TRAIN2VALIDATE), common methodological framework, and best practices in validation across Europe were identified, offering a solid basis for development of educational resources, materials, and other outputs for successful harmonized training of the two addressed professionals. Research was conducted in Spain, Austria, Italy, Romania Germany, and Slovenia and showed that most of the validators and facilitators who answered the survey believe they need better skills and knowledge. The respondents across the EU stated they are very likely to enrol in a program to become certified validators and/or

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facilitators (Dejica et al. 2021). In this chapter we briefly explore some of the the results and findings from Slovenia, where the collection of information on the status of training programs for validators and facilitators was in domain of Zavod RISA, Center for general, functional, and cultural literacy (RISA), a non-governmental organization with over a decade of experience in producing and publishing E2R books and other materials.

## 7.2. Methodology

The research in all the partner countries was based on mixed research methods, which combine qualitative and quantitative approaches. The research in Slovenia followed the workflow of the project by contributing to the joint database of E2R procurers (twelve procurers from Slovenia were added), the repository with specialized literature in the field (nine relevant specialized publications in Slovene language were added) and creation of the online multilingual survey.

RISA created and tested the online version of the survey in Slovene, using Google Forms. The survey was linked to the project website at https://plenainclusionmadrid.org/train2validate/survey/. The survey was prepared in plain Slovene language and consisted of the introductory part and 5 sections: Demographic profile, General education, and training. Education and training in E2R, Current activity and Skills. An email invitation to participate with the link to the Slovene survey was initially sent to twenty-five email addresses.

## 7.3. Results and discussion

Fifty-eight people finished the survey, which represents seventeen percent of all responses, making Slovenia the country with the second highest response among the partner countries, behind Spain with fifty-two percent of the total responses, and the highest response among countries per capita. This is a motivating result that could be partially contributed to recent activities in the field of E2R on the national level, such as project "Lahko je brati"(eng. "It is easy to read"), and partially to dedicated dissemination activities that had accompanied the survey.

The vast majority of the respondents lived in Slovenia, one survey in Cyprus and one in Italy. Their mother tongues were, respectively, Slovene, Serbian and Italian. The age of the respondents varied from twenty years to sixty-one plus years, with majority of them ranging between thirty-one and fifty years of age. Among them, almost seventy-seven percent declared themselves as female, others declared themselves as male. To generalise, an average
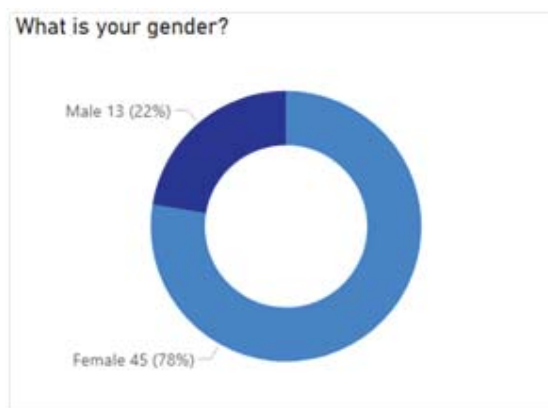


**Image 7.1.** Slovene survey, gender

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surveyee in Slovenia was a female aged thirty-one to fifty.

Eighteen respondents (or 31%) declared themselves as validators, seventeen (or 29%) as facilitators, one surveyee checked both, however, 38% declared themselves neither or something else (e.g., E2R writers, teachers, etc.).

As for the training experience, forty-one (or 71%) of the surveeys expressed they had previously received training related to E2R. Most of them attended workshops and received in house training. The structure of the answers is presented in Image 7.2.

What type of training have you received?

| | |
|---|---|
| I HAVE ATTENDED WORKSHOPS | 33 |
| I HAVE RECEIVED IN-HOUSE TRAINING (AT MY COMPANY/INSTITUTION ETC.) | 16 |
| I HAVE ATTENDED A UNIVERSITY COURSE | 5 |
| WRITING MASTER'S THESIS | 2 |
| ALSO INDEPENDENT RESEARCH AND TRAINING | 1 |
| I ATTENDED E2R GROUPS WHERE WE LEARNED AND MADE E2R | 1 |
| I HAVE ATTENDED A VOCATIONAL COURSE | 1 |
| I HAVE DONE AN INTERNSHIP AND HAVE WORKED AT A FIRM/ASSOCIATION FOR A SHORT ... | 1 |
| PARTICIPATING IN PROJECT LAHKO JE BRATI | 1 |
| RESEARCH IN E2R | 1 |

**Image 7.2.** Slovene survey, type of training

Approximately one in four trainees (or 39%) had not received any handbooks during their training. All others stated they had received handbooks, most frequently the "Lahko je brati" (2019) handbooks – guidelines for E2R in Slovene language. European guidelines Informacije za vse (eng. "Information for all!") (2012) by Inclusion Europe were also mentioned more than once.

Most of the training had been general training (71%), not related to a specific field of E2R. To a question on their familiarity with different aspects of E2R, thirty-seven people responded they were familiar with assessment/validation of comprehension, twenty-eight people knew how to use computer programs and tools, twenty-seven people were familiar with how to write texts in E2R, eight people knew about editorial role and design and three people mentioned knowing the four levels of Easy Slovene.

In continuation to the previous question, the respondents listed which aspect or topics related to E2R would be interesting for them to learn. Fifty-six percent stated they had missed nothing in the trainings. The respondents who had missed certain topics in the trainings provided very diverse answers. As the topics of interest, videos, audio materials, validation, E2R abroad, quality indexes, software, e.g., were mentioned.

As the most efficient training forms/activities, the following were selected (in descendent order): practical workshops and analysis of existing materials, validation exercises, validation projects, in-house trainings, mentorships, and internships.

Time estimations, as on how much time had the respondents spent on the training, varied greatly. Most respondents, however, stated that their training had lasted anywhere from twenty to forty hours.

We asked the respondents where they worked with E2R. Twenty-six respondents chose non-governmental organizations (NGOs), making the NGO the most common place of work. The respondents that were members or contributors of the NGOs most often mentioned Zveza Sožitje - The Slovenian Association for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities, RISA, and Association for adapted communication LABRA. NGOs that work with people with intellectual disabilities were the most prominent answer when asking about the type of the NGO they associated themselves with.

Sixty-nine percent of respondents stated they worked as volunteers. Twenty-four percent of respondents declared the E2R is one part of their job. Seventy-eight percent did not get paid for their work with E2R information.

Fifty-nine percent of respondents had worked with E2R information for somewhere between one and five years. Only fifteen percent had worked in the field for over five years and the remaining respondents had been in the field for less than a year.

Fifty-three percent of respondents stated they worked with E2R information less than one hour a week. Forty percent of them had worked with E2R information somewhere between one and eight hours a week. Only seven percent had worked with the E2R materials more than eight hours a week. In an open question, many respondents expressed they had had to fight to make working with E2R materials a part of their job in public sector or they had still struggled with obstacles such as stiff management.

 When asked to assess their skills, seventy-for percent of the suurveyees stated they needed better knowledge and skills. Nine percent of the respondents felt comfortable with their knowledge and skills and seventeen percent were not sure. Not surprisingly, eighty-two percent would very likely or likely join a certificated program for validators or facilitators. Eighty-eight percent of the respondents would very likely or likely recommend such program to their peers and colleagues.
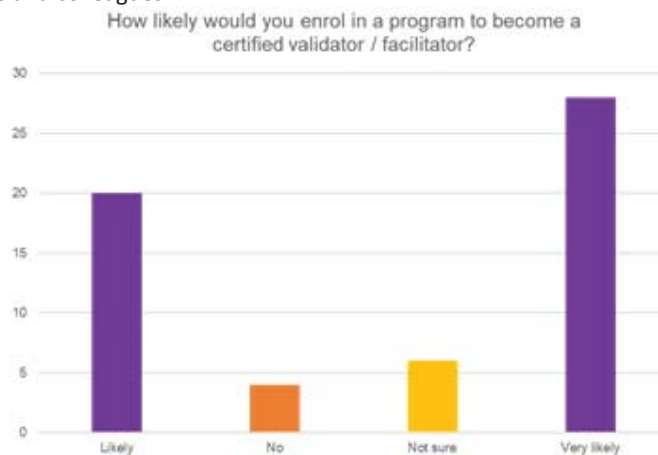


**Image 7.3.** Slovene survey, possible enrolment

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As regards training expectations, the respondents chose existence of experienced validators and facilitators as the most important key component of a successful training program (forty-two people chose that answer). Forty people checked existence of diversified materials for application, thirty-six existence of multi-level training programs, thirty-five, existence of published guidelines and handbooks, thirty-four adequate number of hours, twenty-one existence of a basic universally accepted curriculum, eighteen checked certification and seventeen existence professional trainers, as seen in Image 7.4.



**Image 7.4**. Slovene survey, key components of a program

Nineteen people filled in the part of the survey that was aimed at the validators. Twelve (or 63%) respondents stated they had been trained as validators, the remaining seven (or 27%) respondents had not received training.

Seventy-four percent of the respondents had worked from one to five projects before. Twenty-six percent of the respondents had worked on five to ten projects. None had worked on more than ten projects.

The results revealed that the validators in Slovenia mainly worked in groups as fifty-eight percent of the respondents answered the validation process had usually taken place in a group. Thirty-two percent had had experience working either alone or in a group and only ten percent of respondents had usually worked alone.

Furthermore, the survey showed that ninety-five percent of validators used guidelines for E2R in their work.

As compared to validators, a relatively smaller percent of facilitators (57%) answered they had undergone training. The remaining forty-three percent had not received training. Seventy-one percent of the facilitators had worked on one to five E2R projects. The remaining twenty-nine percent had worked on five to ten or over ten E2R projects, in equal percent.

In open questions, the respondents' responses shed a light on several challenges that occur in the development of E2R in Slovenia, such as poor government and public

administration response, overburdened NGOs and volunteers and resultantly lack of E2R materials for public use, e.g.

## 7.4. Conclusions

The relatively good response to the Slovene survey confirmed previous estimations and research from project PERLSI that interest in E2R in Slovene language or Easy Slovene is steadily increasing in Slovenia.

Though more validators and facilitators expressed they had been trained in E2R and had received handbooks, most of them also stated, they felt they needed better knowledge and skills. As could be expected, eight out of ten respondents would very likely or likely join a certificated program for validators or facilitators or recommend such program to their peers and colleagues.

Validators and facilitators in Slovenia selected practical workshops and exercises as the most helpful forms of their training, so unsurprisingly, most of them chose existence of already experienced validators and facilitators as the most important key component of a successful training program and existence of diversified materials for application, which adds an important potential task to both professions- training new validators and facilitators. The expectations of the respondents, who are mainly interested in receiving (further) training, therewith point towards practically oriented trainings with a lot of workshops and practical exercises.

As in other partner countries, most of the respondents in Slovenia work for/in non-profit organizations, the second biggest group in public institutions and the third largest (in Slovenia, this group is still very small) at universities. They are mainly not paid for the work they do (Dejica et al. 2021). Though the working conditions are substandard, validators and facilitators stay motivated for gaining new knowledge and further working in the field.

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PERLSI project https://www.lu.lv/en/perlsi/
Train2Validate project, "Professional training for easy-to-read facilitators and validators" https://plenainclusionmadrid.org/train2validate/
Train2Validate project partners https://plenainclusionmadrid.org/train2validate/partners/

# 8. National goes international
Angela COTOARĂ

## 8.1. Introduction

Complex language prevents many people from functioning fully as citizens in their own rights. The purpose of Easy-to-read language is to assist people who need it, allows them to gain information, read, express their own thoughts and participate. Accessibility and understandability are basic requirements for independent life and influence in society. Easy-to-read language benefits people with inadequate language skills, increasing their opportunities to cope with situations in everyday life, studies and working life and to participate generally in society. Born as a result is 'language' that serves all the user groups to a better advantage than standard language but especially takes into account the needs and challenges for social inclusion.

Who are the people qualified to create the materials for easy-to-read publications and how do we know that those materials are valid for the specific target group? There has been research and relevant projects to consolidate the role of easy-to-read writer but there is a gap in training and validation. The "Train2Validate" project proposes two new professions: validator and facilitator. Their roles are clearly defined: a validator is a person with reading difficulties who assesses if a text is comprehensible but who needs a facilitator's assistance to finally send back to the easy-to-read writer their validated input.

The first step of "Train2Validate" project has been to collect information from experts in Europe such as validators, facilitators, coordinators of these services and researchers by launching an online survey in English and in all the languages of the partner countries: Spain, Slovenia, Germany, Austria, Italy and Romania. The current article will tackle the results obtained from the English survey which by the language accessibility brought information from the countries in Europe and Canada. It is an abbreviated version of the easy-to-read situation in 12 countries.

## 8.2. Results of the English version of the survey

The variety of countries in which the "Train2Validate" survey reached shows the interest in the objectives of this project. Initially the survey was supposed to be used for the partner countries in their mother tongue but some people preferred the English version which enriched its addressability and diversity.

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**1.1. Where do you live?**
16 responses

Legend:
- Germany
- Italy
- Romania
- Slovenia
- Spain
- Poland
- Canada
- France
- Croatia
- Bulgaria
- Portugal
- Finland

Pie chart values: 12.5%, 12.5%, 12.5%, 12.5%, 31.3%
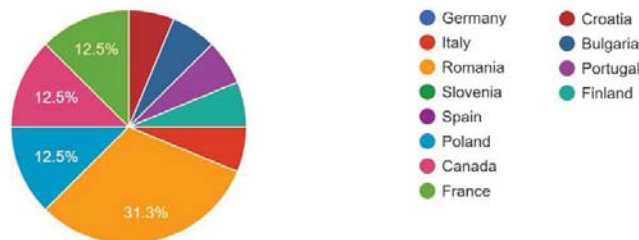
**Figure 8.1.** Percentages of respondents' countries.

### 8.2.1. Easy-to-read for Roma communities in Romania

An intriguing fact is given by the respondents from Romania (31.3%) that belong to some participants in a project implemented by the DIVERS ASSOCIATION in Mures County (one of our project's associated partner) focusing on the use of the easy-to-read methodology for the Roma communities. It was developed in response to the European Commission's Communication on an EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020 in joint efforts to enable Roma inclusion. The illiteracy is much higher among Roma (69 %) than non-Roma (96 %).[1]The experience gained and the lessons learned during the project help improve the design, implementation and monitoring of Roma inclusion policies and actions at the local level. According to the 2011 Census, Mureș County has the second largest percentage of ethnic Roma (8.78 % of the population).[2]

### 8.2.2. How demographics and online survey response behaviour interact

The majority of the respondents were between 51 and over 61 of age with either a master or a PhD degree which shows there is a strong correlation between age and subsequent opinions and behavioural traits. Perceptions differ among survey participants when they are compared by gender: the percentage of female respondents was three times higher than that of the male ones. The same result is observed in the general report on the five mother tongue surveys which raises the question if the difference in female and male response rates is meaningful in itself and if it is a product of differences in female and male values operating in a gendered online environment. For example, in the context of social exchange theory, England (1989) males are more likely to possess or place a high value on separative characteristics than females, while females, on the other hand, are more likely to possess or value characteristics more consistent with connective selves, such as empathy or emotional closeness. Notably, some researchers maintain that females are more likely to engage in online activity characterised by communication and exchanging of information whereas

males are more likely to engage in online activity characterised by seeking of information (Jackson et al. 2001). When one views response behaviour in the context of the online environment, the conclusion that observed differences in response rate are a product of gender differences becomes more powerful. This is because differences in the way females and males inhabit cyberspace may exaggerate the effects of differences in how females and males undergo social exchange, resulting in differences in online survey response rates. As is often the case, these statements offer far more questions than it does unambiguous answers. However, as this matter has not been touched by the Multiplying Event's general report , its importance is offered as points in the growing collection of data describing how demographic and online survey response behaviour interact.

**1.4 What is your gender?**
16 responses
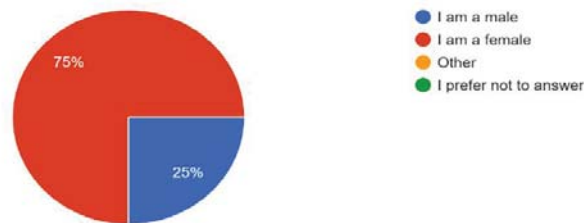


**Figure 8.2.** Percentages of female and male respondents.

### 8.2.3. Training received related to easy-to-read methodology

The ongoing debate over easy-to-read training has shown that 68.8% have no adequate education in the field while 20% have not received any training relying mostly on workshops and conferences' attendance (81.3%) or on self-taught literature (87%).Referring to the type of easy-to-read content, printed and digital content lead with 97%, respectively 80%. Moreover out of training activities practical exercises are by far considered the most useful. It seems that the Finish respondent is a validator who used "Leealaura Leskela" book on Easy Finnish but the majority has basic knowledge feeling that a proper training (between 40 to 60 hours for Validators and 20 and 40 hours for Facilitators) and the interaction with the end users would have helped a lot in their development.

### 8.2.4. Organisations dealing with reading-related disabilities

NGOs are the organisations where 37% work, followed by universities or research institutes with 25% and apart from the Finish professor, all collaborate or are members of an association which deals with intellectual and reading-related disabilities. The Figure 3(4.4 graph) has given rise to a wide array of professions of those interested in easy-to-read methodology who work mostly as volunteers (68.8%). One common thread has been the diversity of the occupations which establishes an impressive network that occurs in a variety of fields merging with the interest for easy-to-read methodology under consideration.

4.4. If you worked in another profession before you became an expert in easy-to-read content, please tell us which one:

16 responses
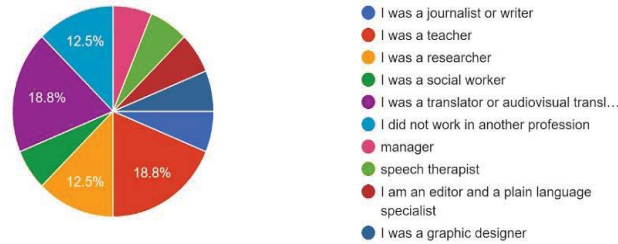


**Figure 8.3** People's professions interested in easy-to-read.

As mentioned before only the Finish respondent works as an untrained (she specified that) validator and facilitator acknowledging that it is a team-work representing interactions among two to four validators and facilitators, and writers using a mix of guidelines. Here other indicators have been introduced implying knowledge and skills needed to fulfill validation and facilitation of easy-to-read materials. Reading (93.8%) and active listening skills (87.5%) are valued as being paramount for a facilitator while knowledge about easy-to-read history and lecturing are considered less significant. However when the key components of a successful training programme are taken into consideration published guidelines (75%) and professional trainers (62.5%) lead the way which engenders our project's justification and sustainability.

"Train2Validate - Professional training for easy-to-read facilitators and validators" project will produce: skill-cards for both profiles validators and facilitators, a modular curriculum, open educational resources in digital accessible format, evaluation tools and possible certifications for both professions validator and facilitator resulting in an innovative perspective of social inclusion - people with reading difficulties are to get a new status in the process of improving easy-to-read materials for their peers.

## 8.3. Conclusions

The English survey version's results presented in the current paper have much in common with the outcomes of the final report done by our partner the Faculty of Communication Sciences of the Polytechnic University of Timișoara. The report which is the first intellectual output of our project gathered the essential information obtained from the processing of the 337 questionnaires and the comparative analysis of other professions in the easy-to-read sphere and the accessibility of information are the starting point for identifying the skills needed by validators and facilitators, developing an appropriate curriculum, validating specific educational resources and professional certification. Each partner was involved in the Multiplying Event which took place online on 26th May 2021. The conference entitled "The Status of Training Programs for Validators and Facilitators in Europe" aimed to

disseminate the main results obtained by completing a survey addressed to validators, facilitators and researchers of easy-to-read materials from the countries participating in the project (Austria, Germany, Italy, Romania, Slovenia and Spain), as well as the presentation of current trends in the field of social inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities and accessibility of information, by specialists in the field from Austria, Belgium, Germany, Italy and Sweden. The growing interest in easy-to-read methodology and in our project's intellectual outputs was shown by 150 people attending the Zoom conference. The conclusion of the English survey version concurs with the diagnosis of the general report namely:

- Easy-to-read is mainly developed by NGOs, instead of educational institutions or enterprises.
- The validators and facilitators profile is mainly feminine
- Volunteers cover the facilitator and validator profile
- The respondents showed their interest in training and in certification of these two professional profiles

"If we work, we get an opportunity to learn new skills". László Bercse: Europe in Action 2021 speech

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## 9. The background and training programs for E2R validators and facilitators in facts and figures. A European perspective

Daniel DEJICA, Simona ŞIMON, Marcela FĂRCAŞIU, Annamaria KILYENI

### 9.1. Introduction

This final chapter presents the general results of a survey conducted within the European Erasmus+ project TRAIN2VALIDATE "Professional training for easy-to-read facilitators and validators", detailed in Chapter 1 of this book (García Muñoz 2022). Part of the Intellectual Output 1 (IO1) of the project, the survey aimed at understanding more about the status and needs of easy-to-read (E2R) validators and facilitators across Europe (Dejica, Şimon, Fărcaşiu and Kilyeni 2021). The research team, methodology and workflow used to meet this aim are presented in Chapter 2 of this book (Dejica, Şimon, Fărcaşiu and Kilyeni 2022a). The individual research results, representative for the countries and languages in which the survey was conducted, i.e., Germany (Bernabé Caro and Cavallo 2022), Italy (Bleve, Eugeni and Sciumbata 2022), Romania (Dejica, Şimon, Fărcaşiu and Kilyeni 2022b), Slovenia (Knapp 2022), Spain (García Muñoz and Bernabé Caro 2022) and English (Cotoară 2022), presented and analysed in the subsequent chapters of the book. The overall presentation and analysis of the results in this chapter responds to the needs and objectives of the TRAIN2VALIDATE project (García Muñoz 2022) and aims at offering a sound basis for the development of skills and knowledge needed for the professionalization of E2R validators and facilitators.

### 9.2. Corpus size and analysis

All in all, we collected 337 national surveys, which in our opinion, and based on Wisdom and Creswell (2013), and Creswell (2014), represent an appropriate sample size for quantitative analysis. Additionally, given that the surveys were submitted from different countries and that the persons who took them are from a widespread geographical area, we believe that the results are representative for the European dimension of the current status of training of E2R facilitators and validators. The preparation of the Excel file needed for analysis, and of the subsequent graphic report was done by Zavod RISA. Data preparation was done in Excel and Power BI - Power Query. The analysis and presentation of the results in this chapter is based on this data.

### 9.3. Research results

The presentation of the research results follows the five main sections of the survey, detailed in Chapter 2 of this book: Demographic Profile, General Education and Training, Education and Training in E2R, Current Activity, and Skills (Dejica, Şimon, Fărcaşiu and Kilyeni 2022a). To

facilitate reading, we illustrated the results by preserving the original numbering of the questions in the survey.

### 9.3.1. Demographic profile

Most of the people who took the survey live in the countries of the project (Spain 52%, Slovenia 17%, Romania 14%, Italy 12%, and Germany 4%); in addition, we received answers from people living in other countries, including Argentina, Austria, Cyprus, Hungary and Switzerland (Image 9.1.). Most of the mother tongues spoken by them mirror the official language of their country (Spanish 50%, Slovene 17%, Italian 12%, Romanian 12%, German 3%), but we have also identified a variety of other mother languages, including Hungarian, Catalan, Russian, Valencian, Galician, Polish and Serbian (Image 9.2.). The widespread geographic representation of the countries and the variety of languages are clear indicators of the European dimension of the project and justify the generalization of the results at European level.
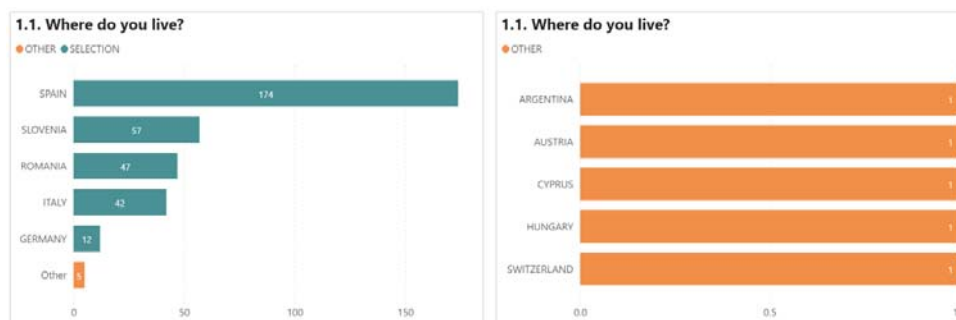
**Image 9.1.** Geographic representation of the respondents
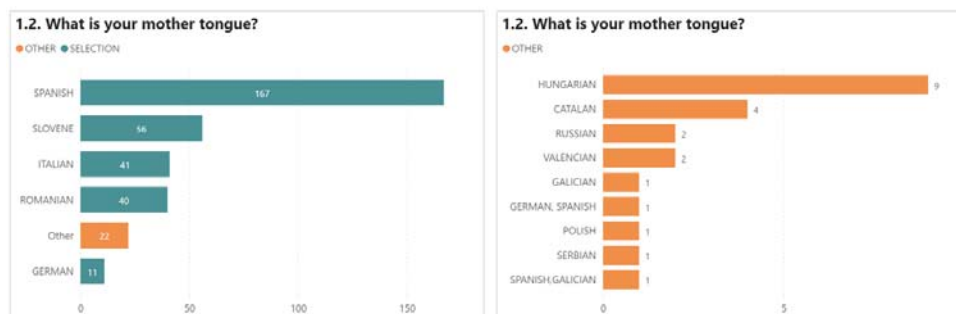
**Image 9.2.** Languages spoken by the respondents

The majority of the respondents are relatively young (31% between 41 and 50; 29% between 31 and 40; 19% between 20 and 30), and 22% are older (17% between 51 and 60; 6%, 61 or older) (Image 9.3.). Two thirds of the people surveyed are women (236) and one third, men (98) (Image 9.4.).
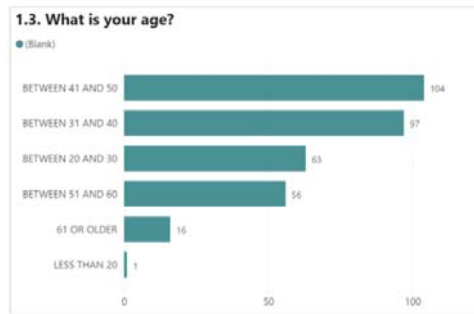
**Image 9.3.** Age of the respondents
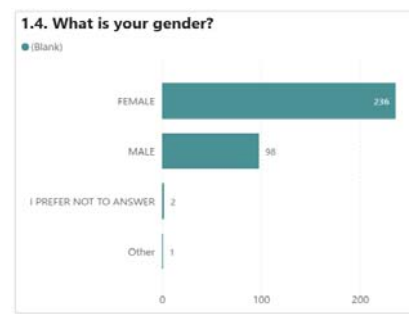


**Image 9.4.** Gender of the respondents

In the optional text box at the end of this section, some of the respondents reported a series of disabilities or impairments, including intellectual disabilities, stroke, aphasia, dyslexia, or working with people with disabilities, which for us are valuable indicators as to the accuracy and relevance of answers received in the survey.

### 9.3.2. General education and training

Concerning their general education and training, most of the respondents (104 people) reported holding an undergraduate academic degree, of which 72 hold a master's degree and 30, a doctoral degree (Image 9.5.).

The respondents reported a variety of ways in which they continue to improve their skills (Image 9.6.), namely they participate in conferences and workshops (221 answers received), they participate in in-house training programs at companies (193 answers), they read literature relevant for their lines of work (190 answers), they communicate with other experts (164 answers), or they do research (90 answers).



**Image 9.5.** Level of education of the respondents



**Image 9.6.** Ways in which respondents improve their skills

### 9.3.3. Education and training in E2R

Regarding the respondents' level of knowledge and skills related to easy-to-read (E2R) content, 65.9% of the 337 people who answered reported having received some training related to E2R (Image 9.7.).

The respondents reported different types of training they received, including workshops (134 answers), vocational courses (121 answers), in-house training (101 answers), or internships (49 answers) (Image 9.8).



**3.1. Have you received training related to E2R?**

● YES ● NO

NO 115 (34.1%)

YES 222 (65.9%)

**Image 9.7.** Training related to E2R

**3.2. What type of training have you received?**

| Answer | Answer (other) | Nr. of answers | % answers |
|---|---|---|---|
| I HAVE ATTENDED WORKSHOPS | I HAVE ATTENDED WORKSHOPS | 134 | 26.6 % |
| I HAVE ATTENDED A VOCATIONAL COURSE | I HAVE ATTENDED A VOCATIONAL COURSE | 121 | 24.1 % |
| I HAVE RECEIVED IN-HOUSE TRAINING (AT MY COMPANY/INSTITUTION ETC) | I HAVE RECEIVED IN-HOUSE TRAINING (AT MY COMPANY/INSTITUTION ETC) | 101 | 20.1 % |
| I AM A SELF-TAUGHT EXPERT | I AM A SELF-TAUGHT EXPERT | 49 | 9.7 % |
| I HAVE DONE AN INTERNSHIP AND HAVE WORKED AT A FIRM/ASOCIATION FOR A SHORT PERIOD | I HAVE DONE AN INTERNSHIP AND HAVE WORKED AT A FIRM/ASOCIATION FOR A SHORT PERIOD | 41 | 8.2 % |

**Image 9.8.** Training received by the respondents

Most of the respondents declared that they are familiar with printed content (205 out of 456 answers received, representing 45% of the samples); 138 stated that they are familiar with digital content (138 answers), and with other formats as well: audiovisual content, including interpreting (58 answers), and audio content (48 answers) (Image 9.9.).

**3.3. What type of E2R content are you familiar with?**

| Answer | Answer (other) | Nr. of answers | % answers |
|---|---|---|---|
| PRINTED CONTENT | PRINTED CONTENT | 205 | 45.0 % |
| DIGITAL CONTENT | DIGITAL CONTENT | 138 | 30.3 % |
| AUDIOVISUAL CONTENT (INCLUDING INTERPRETING) | AUDIOVISUAL CONTENT (INCLUDING INTERPRETING) | 58 | 12.7 % |
| AUDIO CONTENT | AUDIO CONTENT | 48 | 10.5 % |
| Other | BEFORE HAVING A STROKE | 2 | 0.4 % |
| | I DIDN'T HAVE AN IPAD AND I DIND'T USE SIRI | 2 | 0.4 % |
| | I MADE E2R SUBTITLES IN VIDEOS | 1 | 0.2 % |
| | TACTILE BOOKS | 1 | 0.2 % |
| | VOICETHREAD | 1 | 0.2 % |
| Total | | 456 | 100.0 % |

**Image 9.9.** Familiarity with types of E2R content

The answers to question 3.4. (In what field have you been trained?) show that respondents have been trained in both general (57.7%), and specific fields (32.4%).

Question 3.5 in the survey reveals that respondents are familiar with several E2R activities. The 571 answers we processed show that these activities include validating E2R texts with end users (147 answers representing 25.7% of the total number of answers received), adapting/translating texts into E2R texts (145 answers equalling 25.4% ), creating/writing E2R texts (114 answers or 20%), proofreading/revising E2R texts (112 answers or 19.6%), and using dedicated software and hardware (37 answers or 6.5%).

The answers received to question 3.6. *Is there any other field / content you would have liked to be trained in?* show that 119 respondents would not like to be trained in any other additional field. At the same time, the answers we received from other respondents reveal an impressive variety of content and fields of interest related to E2R and accessibility, including E2R translation, audio content, videos in E2R, accessibility in building web sites, digital accessibility, audiovisual sector, and many others.

The answers to question 3.7 *Which of the following training activities have been more useful to you?* show a preference for a variety of hands-on activities, including practical adaptation; translation exercises, practical proofreading; revision exercises, validation; revision quality control, practical creation; writing exercises, analysis of existing E2R content, working with experts, error analysis, or discussing and comparing E2R guidelines.

The majority of the persons who answered question 3.8 of the survey (96 of 176 persons) stated that they had not received or used any handbooks for training. 16 persons declared that they used specific leaflets such as *Information for All* by Inclusion Europe (translated into Spanish by Plena Inclusion, Madrid), while 21 persons stated that they used general guidelines or materials for training including dictionaries or accessibility leaflets.

156 respondents stated that they did not think they had missed something during training (question 3.9 in the survey). 79 respondents reported having been trained for less than 20 hours (35.6% of the answers), 71 between 20 and 40 hours (32%), 33 between 40 and 60 hours (14.9%) and 39 for more than 60 hours (17.6%) (question 3.10 in the survey) (Image 9.10.).
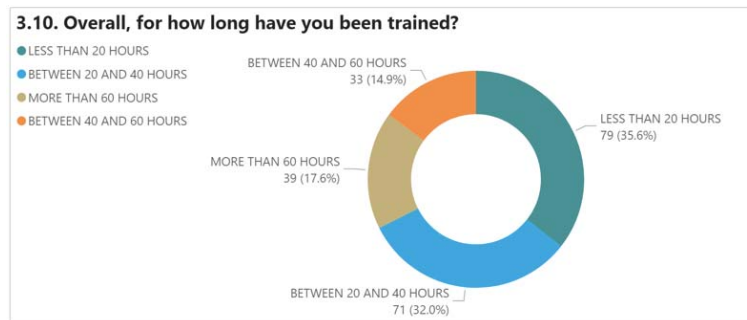


**Image 9.10.** Hours of training programs followed by the respondents

The optional answers to question 3.11 *Is there anything else you would like to add?* reveal that respondents would like to learn more about E2R and do more training, mainly because they forgot what they had learned, because they feel fulfilled doing E2R, or because everything they had learned was self-learning.

### 9.3.4. Current activity

The questions regarding the current activity of the respondents reveal that most of them (162, representing 43.3% of the 374 respondents) work in a non-profit organization. The second and third largest categories consisted of people working in public institutions (66) and

in universities (34). Other individual answers reveal that the respondents work in broadcasting companies, publishing houses, or that they are self-employed or students.

Similarly, the majority of the respondents (65%) state that they collaborate with or are a member of an association (Question 4.2.). As for the the type of association they work for / collaborate with, the majority of the answers (193 out of 301) reveal that these are associations supporting people with intellectual disabilities. (Question 4.3.) (Image 9.11.)



**Image 9.11.** Collaboration with associations

Regarding the professions they worked in before becoming an expert in E2R, 100 respondents (34%) reported that they did not work in another profession. On the other hand, the majority of the 294 answers received (57.1%, totalling 168 answers) displayed various occupations, including those associated with writers, journalists, interpreters, translators, teachers, instructors, counsellors, or researchers.

The answers concerning the activity as an expert in E2R content show that most of the respondents work either part time (47.7%) or as a volunteer (41.1%), and only a small amount work full time (11.3%) (Image 9.12). Most of them (63.6%) reveal that they are not paid for their work (Image 9.13.).
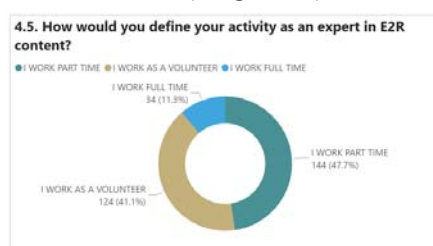


**Image 9.12.** Activity as an expert in E2R content
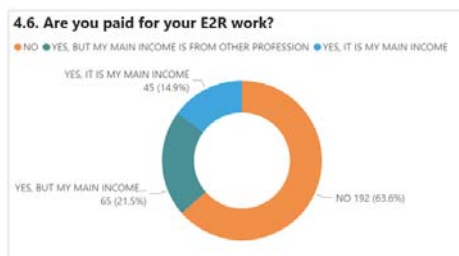


**Image 9.13.** Payment for E2R work

The languages in which respondents work with E2R content mirror to a great extent the languages in which the surveys were conducted, and also some other languages including Catalan, Hungarian, Galician, Valencian, Basque or Croatian, which is also an indicator of how widespread this activity is and the need for E2R content.

More than half of the respondents reported having worked with E2R content between 1 and 5 years (52.7% / 158 answers) (Image 9.14.). Similarly, 51.7% of the respondents, totalling 156 answers, reported that they work with E2R content between 1 and 8 hours a week (Image 9.15.).
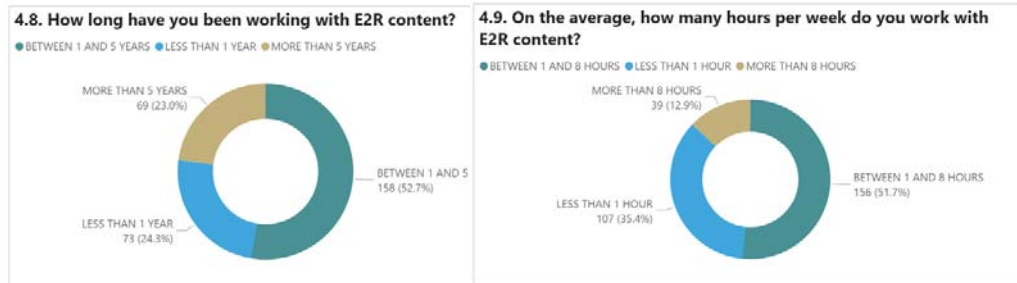
**Image 9.14.** Working experience with E2R content (no. of years)

**Image 9.15.** Working experience with E2R content (hours per week)

The answers received to the last optional question reveal that respondents love doing their work, that they are willing to spend more time doing E2R activities, that they would like to be paid in full for their contribution, and that E2R should be recognised.

### 9.3.4.1. Validators

The 109 validators who answered Questions 4.1.1 and 4.1.2 in the survey stated that they were trained validators (76.1% or 83 answers) and that they had been working on more than 10 validation projects (44% or 48 answers).
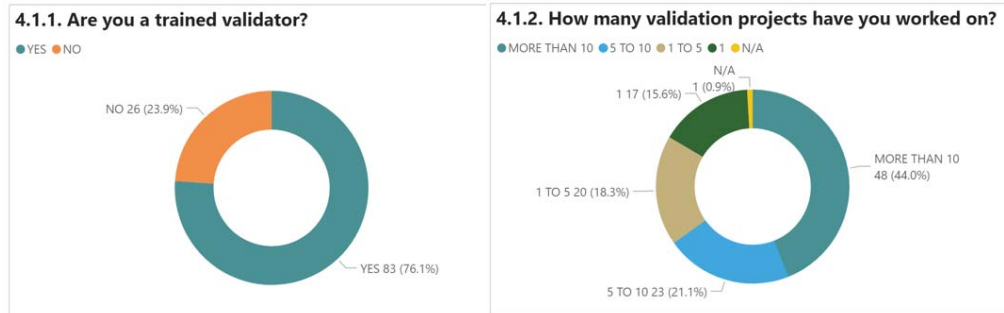


**Image 9.16.** Trained validators who took the survey

**Image 9.17.** Projects validated by the respondents

The majority of the answers reveal that the validation of E2R content is done in a team (80 answers or 73.% of the 109 answers received) (Question 4.1.3. in the survey) (Image 9.18), and the teams consist of other validators, facilitators or writers (Question 4.1.4.).

62 of the 109 validators (56.9%) stated that they worked in a team and shared the document with one or more validators designated by someone else (for example the facilitator), while 35 (32.1%) declared that they preferred to work in a team with other validators chosen by them (question 4.1.5).

The answers concerning the length of a validation session in a day were balanced: 50 validators (45.9%) declared that the validation session usually lasts for less than 2 hours,

53 (48.6%) that they usually work between 2 and 3 hours in a session, while only a small percentage (5.5%) declared that they work for more than 3 hours (Image 9.19.).

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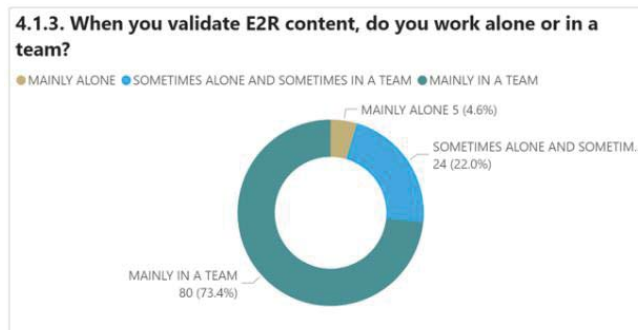


**Image 9.18.** Type of work in validation projects
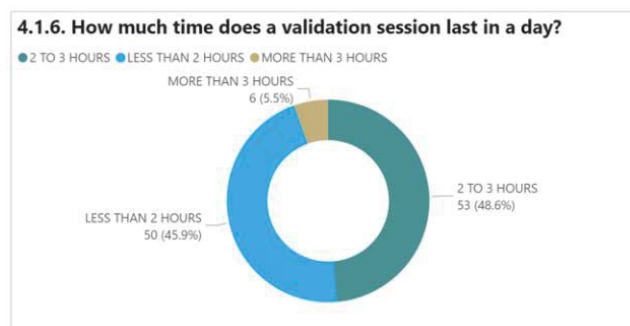


**Image 9.19.** Length of a validation session
(no. of hours per day)

Most of the validators use guidelines when they validate E2R content (Image 9.20.): 71.6% always do, while 19.3% often do so. Only a small percentage, 6.4%, use guidelines rarely, while 2.8% never do.

The types of guidelines used by validators are national (59.3%) or European (38.2%). Some of the reasons given by the validators who do not always use guidelines (Question 4.1.9.) include the fact that they do not trust them and that they prefer to work and decide in a team instead, that they believe the guidelines are not adequate for validators, readers, or people with disabilities
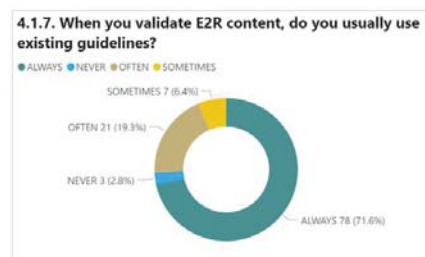


**Image 9.20.** Use of existing guidelines in the process of E2R validation

### 9.3.4.2. Facilitators

Out of the 78 respondents who answered the questions in section 4.2. of the survey (Your current activity as a facilitator), 48 (61.5%) stated that they were trained facilitators, while 30 (38.5%) stated that they were not (Image 9.21.).

Before working as a facilitator, some of them fulfilled one or several roles related to E2R; of the 128 answers received, such roles included being a trainer (24.2%), validator (21.9%), writer (15.1%), researcher (10.2%), translator (10.2%) or editor (5.5%) (Question 4.2.2. in the survey).



**Image 9.21.** Trained facilitators who took the survey

The 222 answers to question 4.2.3. revealed that all the respondents were also filling other positions while being a facilitator; these positions imply translating E2R content (25.7%), reviewing E2R content (21.2%), producing/writing E2R content (20.3%), giving workshops/lectures on E2R (15.8%), doing research (9.5%) or editing (4.1%).

37.2% of the facilitators stated that they had facilitated more than 10 validation projects, 14.1%, 5 to 10 projects, 25.6%, 1 to 5 projects, and 20,5%, 1 project.

When they assess the feasibility of a validation project, 32.9% of the facilitators (28 answers of the total of 85 registered answers) sometimes communicate with other facilitators before taking a decision, 21.2% assess the



**Image 9.22.** Validation projects facilitated by the respondents

feasibility of a validation project based on their own experience, while 20% always communicate with a validator before taking a decision. Other individual answers relate mainly to teamwork, such as consulting with colleagues, working with other professionals, or with volunteers (Question 4.2.5).

The 207 answers we received to question 4.2.6. reveal that in the facilitation process, facilitators communicate with different people involved in the production of E2R content, including validators (30.9%), other facilitators (23.7%), people who need and use E2R content (21.3%), writers (15%), researchers (3.9%), editors/publishers (3.4%). In most cases, the validation team consists of several individuals, its size ranging from 5 or more persons (44.9% of the cases), to 3-4 persons (43.6%), or less, 1-2 persons (11.5%) (Question 4.2.7.) (Image 9.23.).

**Image 9.23.** Size of the validation team

In more than half of the cases (42 answers out of 78 received to question 4.2.8.), facilitators set up the validation team for a specific project by themselves. 11 facilitators stated that there was no pre-established validation team, while 7 stated that their employer set up the team. Other individual answers reveal that the persons in charge for setting up the team differ in many organizations, and that they may be experts, supervisors, trainers or other workmates.

Once the validation is completed, facilitators usually communicate with E2R writers in writing (25.8%, representing 34 answers out of the 132 answers received to question 4.2.9.). Other ways of communication include face-to-face (15.9%) or by phone (15.2%).

In most of the cases, facilitators receive feedback from E2R writers based on the validation comments (37 out of 78 answers received to Question 4.2.10.). 19 facilitators declared that they did not receive any form of feedback, while 11 stated that E2R writers reviewed the comments and amendments and did not send them the updated version for validation. Other individual responses show that there are no fixed procedures as far as feedback is concerned.

In case facilitators do receive an updated version of the document, almost half of them (47.6%, representing 39 answers out of the 82 answers received to question 4.2.11) send it back to the validator for conformity, while 22% (18) check to see if any changes were made in the document.

To organize sessions, most of the facilitators use a variety of tools, including traditional work management tools such as printed calendars, notebooks, reminders, etc. (23.3% representing 47 cases of the 202 answers received), video-conferencing systems (16.3%), computer-based management tools (14.9%), web-based communication platforms (13.4%) or dedicated software (12.4%) (Question 4.2.12 in the survey).

21 respondents (out of 78) to question 4.2.13 stated that they did not use any facilitation strategies to organise sessions, while only 4 stated that they used such strategies. The respondents who detailed the answers to this question mentioned that they communicated with validators, made sure that they understood the requirements, used group reading or motivational strategies.

### 9.3.5. Skills

Question 5.1. in the survey is one of the questions which cumulated the largest number of answers (2139). Regarding the knowledge and skills validators should have, the respondents offered balanced answers and checked most of the answers given: Active listening skills (247 answers), Easy-to-read principles, guidelines, recommendations, and standards (246), Skills for working in teams (240), Reading skills (238), Global Easy-to-read knowledge: history, guidelines, target groups (216), Vocal and communication skills (216), Writing skills (including punctuation and spelling) (176), Genre knowledge (familiarity with the content and structure

of different text types) (139), Computer skills (including dedicated software and new technologies) (130), Organization and time management skills (128), and Multimodality (including moving images, pictures, tone of voice, noises, background music, etc.) (122).

**5.1. To validate good quality E2R content, a validator should have knowledge and skills in the following areas.**

| Answer | | Nr. of answers | % answers (other) |
|---|---|---|---|
| ACTIVE LISTENING SKILLS | | 247 | 11.5 % |
| E2R PRINCIPLES, GUIDELINES, RECOMMENDATIONS AND STANDARDS | | 246 | 11.5 % |
| SKILLS FOR WORKING IN TEAMS | | 240 | 11.2 % |
| READING SKILLS | | 238 | 11.1 % |
| GLOBAL E2R KNOWLEDGE: HISTORY, GUIDELINES, TARGET GROUPS | | 216 | 10.1 % |
| VOCAL AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS | | 216 | 10.1 % |
| WRITING SKILLS (INCLUDING PUNCTUATION AND SPELLING) | | 176 | 8.2 % |
| GENERAL KNOWLEDGE (FAMILIARITY WITH THE CONTENT AND STRUCTURE OF DIFFERENT TEXT TYPES) | | 139 | 6.5 % |
| COMPUTER SKILLS (INCLUDING DEDICATED SOFTWARE AND NEW TECHNOLOGIES) | | 130 | 6.1 % |
| ORGANIZATION AND TIME MANAGEMENT SKILLS | | 128 | 6.0 % |
| MULTIMODALITY (INCLUDING MOVING IMAGES, PICTURES, TONE OF VOICE, NOISES, BACKGROUND MUSIC ETC) | | 122 | 5.7 % |
| Other | | 41 | 1.9 % |
| **Total** | | **2139** | **100.0 %** |

**Image 9.24.** Respondents' beliefs related to the skills and knowledge needed by validators

In the process of validation (Question 5.2 in the survey), the respondents consider that a validator should check if the E2R text is clear, accurate, natural and consistent (274 responses, representing 20% of the total number of answers given), if the E2R text is acceptable and informative enough (253 responses), if the E2R text is fluent, well organized and structured (246 responses), if the E2R text design and layout are correct (230 responses), if the E2R text is grammatically correct, words are properly chosen and spelt, and punctuation is correct (193 responses), if multimodality is well used (155 responses).

Question 5.3 in the survey regarding the knowledge and skills that facilitators should have or use in the validation process has also registered a large and well-balanced number of answers (2332). Respondents believe that facilitators should have knowledge and skills related to target groups: types of disabilities, needs, perception and cognitive processing (227 answers out of 2332 received), Global Easy-to-read knowledge: history, guidelines, target groups (265), Basic validation skills and strategies to develop validations (264), Organizational skills, including working in teams (263), Familiarity with basic communication and mediation principles (241), Computer skills (including dedicated software and new technologies) (223), Time management skills (207), (Media) accessibility (standards, legislation, guidelines, principles and applicable scenarios, technologies, etc.) (198), Genre knowledge (familiarity with the content and structure of different text types) (193), and Multimodality (including the role of paratextual information) (179).

Concerning the key components of a successful training program for validators and facilitators, most answers focused on the existence of published guidelines and handbooks (254 answers out of 1787 received), of experienced validators and facilitators as lecturers (243 answers), of diversified materials and applications (224), of multilevel training programs (212), of professional trainers (209), of some sort of recognition (certificates, diplomas) (202), and of a basic, universally accepted curriculum (194).

Most respondents consider that a basic training program for validators should consist of 20 to 40 hours (155 answers representing 46% out of the 337 answers received), 94 consider that less than 20 hours, while 68, that a training program should consist of 40 to 60 hours (Question 5.5 in the survey).

On the other hand, an advanced training program for specialized validators should consist of 40 to 60 hours, according to almost half of the respondents (158 answers representing 46.7% out of the total of 338 answers received). 112 respondents consider that an advanced program should consist of 20 to 40 hours, while 39 believe that less than 20 hours (Question 5.6 in the survey).

As far as a training program for facilitators is concerned, 142 respondents (42.1% of the 337 answers received) believe that it should consist of 20 to 40 hours, 112 of 40 to 60 hours, and 48, less than 20 hours.

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). (Image 9.25.)
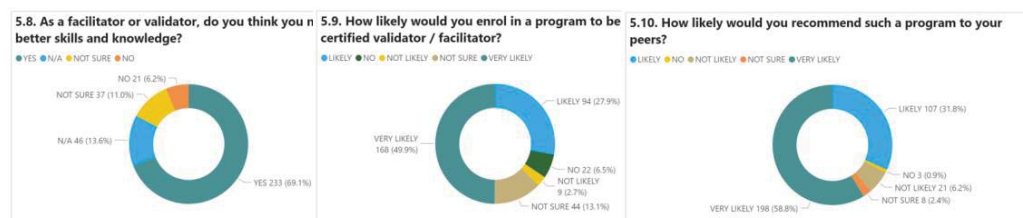


**Image 9.25.** Respondents' position related to the continous training of validators and facilitators

In the optional text box at the end of section 5 of the survey, respondents reconfirmed their passion for E2R and their interest to enrol in training programs for validators and facilitators.

### 9.3.6. Conclusion

Our main aim in the first phase of the European Erasmus+ project TRAIN2VALIDATE "Professional training for easy-to-read facilitators and validators" (Intellectual Output 1) was to understand more about the status and needs of easy-to-read (E2R) validators and facilitators across Europe (García Muñoz, 2022). To meet this aim, we developed a methodology for surveying validators and facilitators in Europe (Dejica, Șimon, Fărcașiu, Kilyeni, 2022a). In this chapter, we presented the results of a survey we conducted in several European countries, including Germany, Italy, Romania, Slovenia, and Spain.

337 persons took the survey. The widespread geographic representation of their countries of origin and the variety of languages they use are clear indicators for the European dimension of the project and justify the generalization of the results at European level. We may thus consider that the results we obtained are representative for the status of training programs for validators and facilitators in Europe. The analysis of the demographic profile of the respondents also suggests that most of the persons who are involved in validation and

facilitation activities are relatively young. This result confirms that new professions are usually associated with young people, and that validation and facilitation have a lot of potential from the perspective of the human resources involved in these processes.

The analysis of the general education and training of the participants in the survey shows that most of them are educated and that they hold at least an undergraduate degree. Two thirds of the respondents declared that they received some training related to E2R, including workshops, vocational courses, in-house training or internships, and that they were familiar with different types of E2R content, such as printed, digital, or audiovisual. Similarly, about two thirds of the respondents declared that they would be ready to be trained in other fields of interest related to E2R and accessibility, including E2R translation, audio content, videos in E2R, accessibility in building web sites, digital accessibility, or audiovisual sector, and take part in a variety of hands-on activities, including practical adaptation; translation exercises, practical proofreading; revision exercises, validation; revision quality control, practical creation; writing exercises, analysis of existing E2R content, working with experts, error analysis, or discussing and comparing E2R guidelines. Additionally, the answers we analysed in this section reconfirm that there are no or few specialised materials for training.

Concerning the current activity of validators and facilitators, our study reveals that most of them (1) work in non-profit organizations, public institutions or universities, (2) collaborate with associations supporting people with intellectual disabilities, (3) worked as writers, journalists, interpreters, translators, teachers, instructors, counsellors, or researchers before becoming experts in E2R, and (4) work part-time or as volunteers and are not paid for their work.

Based on the answers we collected from the validators we may draw their profile as follows: most of them are trained validators; the validation of the E2R content is usually done in a team which consists of other validators, facilitators or writers; the length of a validation session usually lasts less than two hours, but there are cases in which it may last between two and three hours; most of the validators use guidelines when they validate E2R content. As far as facilitators are concerned, their profile may be synthetised as follows: two thirds of the participants in the survey are trained facilitators; before working as a facilitator they fulfilled other roles related to E2R, such as trainers, validators, writers, researchers, translators or editors; in addition, all of them are also filling other positions, such as translating or writing E2R content, giving workshops or lectures in E2R, doing research or editing; when assessing the feasibility of a validation project, most of them work in a team with other facilitators or validators, and that they are consulting their colleagues or other professionals; the size of the validation team usually ranges from three to more than five persons; once the validation is completed, facilitators usually communicate with E2R in writing, face-to-face, or by phone; in most of the cases, they receive feedback from E2R writers based on the validation comments, which is sent to validators for conformity; and the tools they use to organise their work include traditional work-management tools, video-conferencing systems, computer-based management tools, web-based communication platforms or dedicated software.

Concerning the skills validators should have, the respondents offered a multitude of answers, ranging from active listening skills to organization and time management skills, which are all detailed in section 9.3.5. of this chapter. In a similar way, the skills facilitators

should have, include knowledge and skills related to target groups, E2R, basic validation skills, computer skills and many others, detailed in the same section of this chapter. Most of the validators and facilitators who took the survey declared that they needed better skills and knowledge and that they were likely to enrol in a program to become certified validators / facilitators.

We believe that the results we obtained and presented in this chapter are rich, diversified, realistic, and representative for a widespread geographical area in Europe, and will offer a solid ground for the successful advancement of the next activities of the project, namely to identify and document the skills and competencies needed by validators and facilitators (IO2), to develop a competence-based curricula (IO3), to create open educational resources (IO3), to provide assessed training materials (IO4), and to explore certification pathways (IO6).

We also believe that the secondary results obtained in IO1 – the creation of a database with specialised literature in the field, the creation of a network of specialists (writers, publishing houses, NGOs or organisations that publish E2R content), the participation in conferences and the massive presence of the TRAIN2VALIDATE project in the press and on social platforms through specific PR and communication activities – combined with a continuing successful cooperation between the project partners, will also facilitate the development of the future IOs of the project.

Last but not least, we think that the working methodology we created may be improved like any other methodology, and that, at the same time, it may be used as a model of good practice for other similar research projects.

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## Webography

Easy-to-read survey for facilitators and validators
https://plenainclusionmadrid.org/train2validate/survey/
Train2Validate project, "Professional training for easy-to-read facilitators and validators"
https://plenainclusionmadrid.org/train2validate/
Train2Validate project partners https://plenainclusionmadrid.org/train2validate/partners/

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