

Interviews Synthesis Report



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1 - Introduction

This document presents the consolidated results of the interviews conducted by the partners of the Text it Easy project as part of WP2 – Activity A3.

The objective of this activity was to gather qualitative insights from professionals, experts, and learners from the field of adult education, communication, accessibility, and literacy in order to better understand:

- their knowledge of plain language and clear communication
- their current practices and challenges
- their needs for training and support
- their perceptions of audiences facing reading or comprehension difficulties

The results will guide the development of the project's training curriculum and resources aimed at improving clear communication in adult education and professional contexts.

2 - Methodology

2.1. General objectives

Each partner was asked to conduct a minimum of three qualitative interviews with key stakeholders relevant to the themes of plain language, communication, adult learning, accessibility, or content creation.

The interviews aimed to collect:

- the level of awareness regarding plain language and Easy-to-Read standards
- real-life practices in professional and educational environments
- needs, barriers and expectations related to clear communication
- perceptions of target groups struggling with reading and comprehension

2.2. Interviewees profiles

Partners were encouraged to diversify their interviewees. Across the consortium, the following categories of stakeholders were consulted:

Direct stakeholders

1. Training organisations offering courses on plain language
2. Trainers and learners who attended these courses
3. Freelancers or companies providing plain language or Easy-to-Read transcription services

Indirect stakeholders

4. Associations supporting people with literacy difficulties
5. Adults with literacy difficulties
6. Teachers and teacher trainers (general education or special education)
7. Professors of communication
8. Freelancers and companies offering communication, marketing, and copywriting services
9. Employees of large companies handling written communication, customer relations or service documentation
10. Public administration staff
11. Web designers and inclusive content creators

This variety of profiles allowed for a rich and cross-sectoral perspective on clear language needs and practices.

2.3. Data collection

A semi-structured interview guide was provided to all partners. Questions were adapted depending on the profile of the interviewee. Interviews were transcribed in English and delivered as individual files.

2.4. Interviews conducted

A total of **39 interviews** were conducted:

- **Romania:** 6 interviews (teachers, special education teachers, association members, web designer)
- **France:** 4 interviews (adult education trainers and training managers)
- **North Macedonia:** 10 interviews (teachers in vocational training)
- **Croatia:** 8 special education teachers + 8 adult learners
- **Belgium:** 3 professionals working on inclusive content creation

3. Interview Guide

General information

- Name, email, organisation, position
- Age, nationality

1. Writing volume and context

1.a. How many pages of text do you write per day (in Arial 12 equivalent)?

1.b. What are your main types of communication (emails, reports, guidelines...)?

1.c. Do you work with pre-written templates?

2. Comprehensibility

2.a. Are your texts easy to understand for your target audience?

2.b. Are they easy to understand for everyone?

3. Attention to complexity

1. Do you pay attention to sentence length, syntax, vocabulary difficulty?

4. Audiences with reading difficulties

- 4.a. What proportion of people do you think struggle with written texts?
- 4.b. Which groups might face difficulties?
- 4.c. Is this an important social issue?
- 4.d. Should this be considered in your work?
- 4.e. What are the obstacles (time, organisation, skills...)?

5. Plain Language

- 5.a. Have you heard of Easy-to-Read / FALC?
- 5.b. Have you heard of Plain Language?
- 5.c. Do you know the difference?
- 5.d. What is your understanding of Plain Language?
- 5.e. Do you know any rules?
- 5.f. Have you offered/received training on PL?
- 5.g. Is it effective? Any feedback?
- 5.h. Is it effective only in certain situations?
- 5.i. Would you like to master it better?
- 5.j. Do you need training or is attention enough?
- 5.k. Will plain language spread?
- 5.l. Should it be generalised?
- 5.m. Should public institutions or companies be required to use it?
- 5.n. Any criticisms or suggestions?

4. Main Findings

4.1. Knowledge and awareness of Plain Language

Across all countries, the majority of participants had some level of awareness of the need for clear and accessible communication. However:

- Plain Language is not widely known as a standard.
- “Easy-to-Read / FALC” is better known, especially among teachers and associations.
- Many confuse Plain Language with FALC.
- Several professionals believe they “intuitively” know if a text is clear — revealing a subjective approach.

4.2. Understanding of target groups

Most interviewees were able to identify groups that may struggle with written communication:

- people with low literacy
- adults returning to education
- people with cognitive or learning disabilities
- migrants and allophone learners
- young adults in vocational or technical education

However:

- the estimated proportion of people with reading difficulties was often very low and underestimated.
- only specialised teachers and associations provided realistic estimates.

4.3. Current practices

The interviews highlight that:

- Clear writing is often used only when addressing specific audiences.
- Many organisations create two versions of the same document:
 - an “original” version (complex)
 - an “adapted” version (simplified)
- Plain language is mostly used for:
 - internal and external emails
 - customer information
 - educational communication
 - website content

Very few organisations create documents natively in plain language, which increases workload and reduces consistency.

4.4. Barriers and challenges

Interviewees identified several obstacles:

1. Lack of training and lack of experts
2. Absence of standardisation → rules interpreted differently
3. Subjectivity → no way to validate readability
4. Time constraints
5. Difficulty convincing employers or colleagues
6. Low organisational awareness or prioritisation

The lack of an official, recognised standard was frequently mentioned.

4.5. Needs identified

Stakeholders expressed the need for:

- a simple and standardised Plain Language guide, with clear rules and examples
- before/after examples and templates
- a synonym dictionary or word list
- practical training modules focused on real documents
- a readability analysis tool with objective scoring
- a communication toolkit to advocate for Plain Language internally
- accessible training materials for adult learners

These needs are fully aligned with the objectives of Text it Easy.

4.6. Effectiveness and perceptions

Among interviewees who had used Plain Language or Easy-to-Read:

- Most reported positive effects (improved understanding, fewer mistakes, less stress for learners).
- Some highlighted that PL works best for information documents, instructions, emails, and pedagogical supports.
- **A common concern: “Using Plain Language may sound too simplistic for some professional contexts.”**
- This reflects the need for awareness-raising and professional examples adapted to each sector.

4.7. Differences between countries

The analysis also revealed differences:

- French-speaking countries tend to be more familiar with debates around Plain Language.
- Balkan countries expressed stronger needs for practical tools, examples, and training.
- Special education teachers generally showed greater awareness of reading difficulties.

5 - Conclusion

The interviews conducted across partners show a clear and common need for improving clear communication in adult education and professional environments.

Key takeaways:

1. Plain Language is insufficiently known and lacks standardisation.
2. Easy-to-Read is better recognised but still underused.
3. Writing is often adapted after the fact, not designed from the start.
4. Professionals underestimate the extent of reading difficulties in the adult population.
5. There is a strong demand for:
 - standard rules
 - practical tools
 - training
 - objective evaluation methods
6. Creating a European training framework and shared resources is necessary and supported by stakeholders.
7. A potential official label or recognition system could ease adoption at institutional level.

These findings confirm the relevance and necessity of the Text it Easy project and will be used to inform the design of the training modules, digital tools, and resources developed in WP3 and WP4.

