



IMPLEMENTING A
DIGITAL
E-LEARNING
ALTERNATIVE

INTELLECTUAL OUTPUT 1

Online teaching and learning during COVID-19 learner survey and analysis

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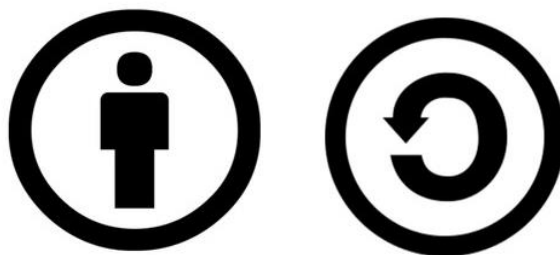
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1. Introduction

Digital accessibility and inclusive learning are the central axes of the IDE@ project, which aims at developing the necessary skills to train professionals in online educational contexts, to create inclusive and accessible online teaching materials to reach all learners, regardless of their needs.

Initially, the IDE@ project differentiated between “accessible teaching” as part of Intellectual Output 1 (IO1), and “inclusive teaching” as part of IO2. However, accessibility and inclusion can not be dissociated as they are close related concepts.

As stated by the United Nations CRPD slogan “Nothing about us without us”, thus, no accessibility can be reached without including the views of all users. Therefore, focus was shifted to “online teaching and learning during the COVID-19 from a learners' perspective“, which is the aim of O1, and “online teaching and learning during the COVID-19 from a teachers' perspective“, which is the aim of O2. This fact allows to include the voice of the different agents involved in online teaching and learning practices during the COVID-19.

This report provides a summary of the work conducted for Intellectual Output 1 for the definition of competences for the new certified professional profile "Trainer in accessible and inclusive distance learning". It firstly explains the objectives of this Intellectual Output and the KPIs. It then summarizes the methods used to achieve the main goals and reports the time frames. Finally, the report presents the final outcomes and the dissemination.

2. Objectives

This IO aims to define the needed competences for the certification "Trainer in accessible and inclusive distance learning" from learners' perspective.

The main objectives of this IO were to:

1. Map the current situation of online teaching practises in higher education and vocational education contexts in the EU.
2. Identify the profile of teachers in online educational environments.
3. Identify the challenges of online teaching and learning during the COVID-19 from a learner's perspective.
4. Examine users' familiarity with Universal Design for Learning principles.
5. Identify needed training for professionals in online teaching contexts in terms of inclusion and accessibility.
6. Propose and validate the needed competences for the creation of a new certified professional profile "Trainer in accessible and inclusive distance learning".

3. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

- Number of participating learners with experience in online learning during COVID-19: 59
- Number of participating learners from higher education: 52
- Number of participating learners from vocational training: 41
- Number of participating learners with possible interested in the training: 27
- Total number of participants: 60

4. Methods

During this IO, all partners worked together over a period of 9 months. Previous competence definitions were gathered from:

- Erasmus+ media accessibility projects in which ECQA, KOENA and UAB have been involved:
 - ACT (<http://pagines.uab.cat/act/>)
 - ADLABPRO (<https://www.adlabpro.eu/>)
 - EASIT (<http://pagines.uab.cat/easit/en>)
 - IMPACT (<https://impact-access.eu/>)
 - LTA (<https://ltaproject.eu/>)
- Projects related to establishing skills for vocational trainers in Europe:
 - ESCOT (<https://gipfar.wixsite.com/escot/the-project>)
 - Applying Universal Design for Learning in online contexts (Tinel) : <https://www.hamk.fi/projects/tinel/?lang=en>
- Cash et al. (2021) “Distance Educators Attitudes and Actions towards Inclusive Teaching Practices”. (Cash, C., Cox, T., & Hahs-Vaughn, D. (2021). *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 21(2). (<https://doi.org/10.14434/josotl.v21i2.27949>)
- Lombardi et al. (2015) “International Comparisons of Inclusive Instruction Among College Faculty in Spain, Canada, and the United States”. Lombardi, Vukovic, & Sala-Bars (2015). *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability*, 28(4), 447-460.
- OECD (2021) “Implications of the COVID-19 Pandemic for Vocational Education and Training”. (OECD (2021). OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/55afea00-en>)
- Rose, D.H., and Meyer, A., Eds. (2006). A practical reader in Universal Design for Learning.

An overview of the available training in Universal Design for Learning (UDL) shows that existing training is mainly addressed in primary education (KA-12) (Rose et al. 2006). Some research can also be found about UDL in higher education at a tertiary level (i.e. universities) (Lombardi et al. 2015). Due to the COVID-19 situation, recent research has focused on applying UDL to distance learning in higher education (Cash et al. 2021 and Tinel project). Yet, little to no research can be found about training in UDL addressing vocational online educational contexts.

The IDE@ project aims at developing the skills and designing the curriculum for the certified profile "Trainer in accessible and inclusive distance learning". This certified trainer may be in charge of understanding, detecting, planning, designing, creating, and managing inclusion and digital accessibility in online educational contexts.

The competences for a certified "Trainer in accessible and inclusive distance learning" are attached as annex I.

The final outcome was developed after several rounds of comments and feedback gathered from IDE@ partners according the following timeline:

- April 2021: presentation of IO2 definition at the kick-off meeting
- May 2021: competence definition, and first version of the online survey to teachers was sent to all partners.
- June 2021: all partners provided comments to the first version of the online survey.
- July-August 2021: second version of the online survey was sent to partners to gather comments.
- September 2021: UAB implemented the suggestions from all partners and sent off the final draft of the online survey for validation.
- October 2021: final version of the online survey was validated by all partners, and translation into the 5 languages of the consortium was requested. Languages: Catalan, English, French, German and Spanish.
- October 2021: launch of the final version of the online survey in 5 languages.
- November 2021: online survey was closed and data collection started.
- Dec. 2021 – Jan. 2022: 3 online focus groups to teachers were organised to gather further qualitative data regarding the proposed competences.
- January 2022: the final draft of the IO1 report was validated by all partners.

4.1. Methodological tools

The methodological tools selected to gather quantitative and qualitative data from participants were first a questionnaire (Annex II), and second a focus group. Procedures were followed in order to ensure compliance with EU General Data Protection Regulation.

4.2. Online questionnaire

The questionnaire was sent to different academic and vocational training organisations to map the current practises in inclusive and accessible teaching available in online contexts, before and during the COVID-19, from the perspective of learners.

The questionnaire was divided in two main parts. In the first part the respondents gave information about their demographics, and in the second part they gave feedback on their experience in online courses on inclusion and accessibility topics. The survey is available in Annex II.

The questionnaire was designed to take approximately 15 minutes to complete, with a majority of closed-ended items requiring the ticking of boxes to allow quick and easy feedback, some questions requiring graded responses using the standard set of responses (very important to not important at all, very easy to very difficult, or very familiar to not familiar at all), some questions were formulated using the Likert scale technique with a numerical 1 to 4 scale.

Moreover, in order to gather further qualitative data to complement the quantitative data collected, some questions included an open-ended item in the form of room for comments.

4.2.1. Data collection

The questionnaires were translated in the five languages of the consortium and sent across the partner countries. However the amount of answers differed depending on the country. The French questionnaire received 55 answers, the Spanish questionnaire received 4 and the English one. The last one was discarded due to lack of relevance.

4.2.2. Survey results

4.2.2.1 Demographics

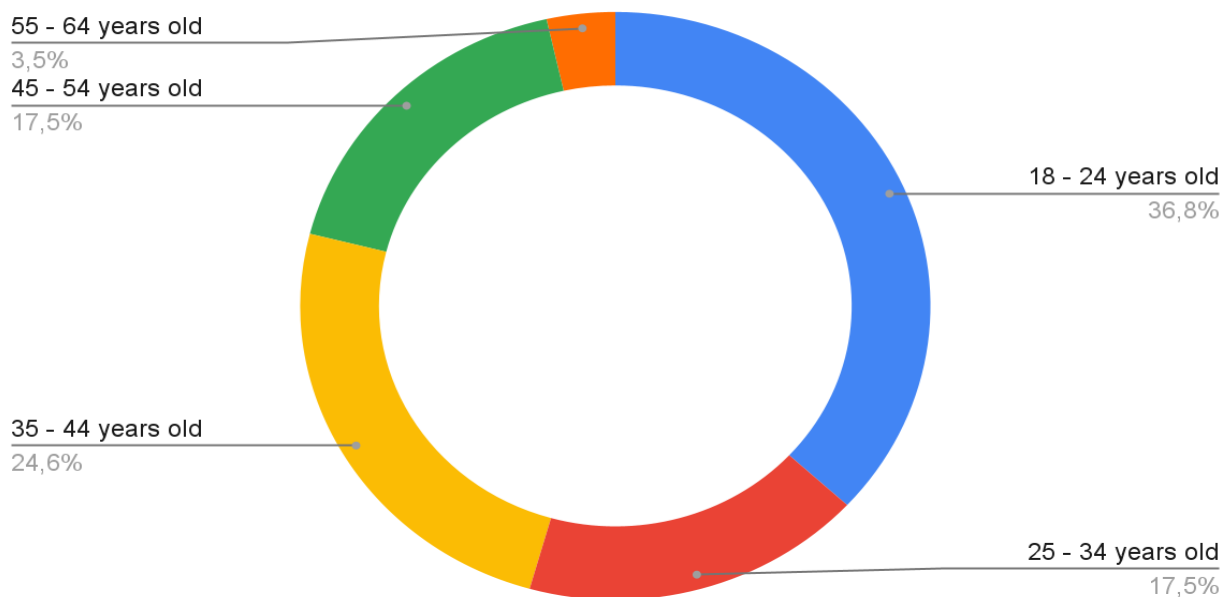
The first section of the survey was aimed at gathering demographic information with 11 questions which required basic information related to:

1. age range and gender
2. learning country and languages
3. educational level
4. learning formats and practises before and during COVID-19
5. learning preferences
6. learners average enrolment in online courses.

Age and gender

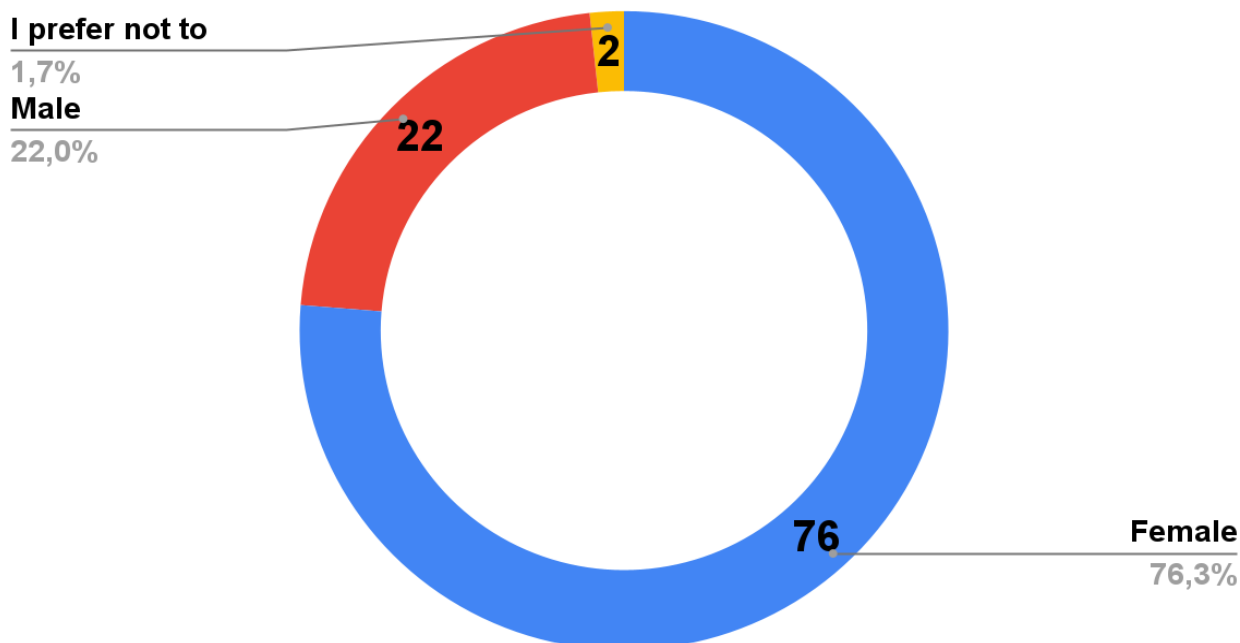
The participants were mostly (54%) under the age of 34. The two main age ranges were 18 - 24 years old (37%) and 35 - 44 years old (25%).

Age range



76% participants were female, 22% were male and one participant did not specify. The 4 Spanish respondents were women.

Gender



Learning countries and languages

Answers were received mainly from France for the French survey and from Spain for the Spanish/Catalan survey. Answers also came from Germany, Bangladesh and Belgium.

86% of respondents studied in their mother tongue, among the others only one participant had difficulties for not studying in their mother tongue.

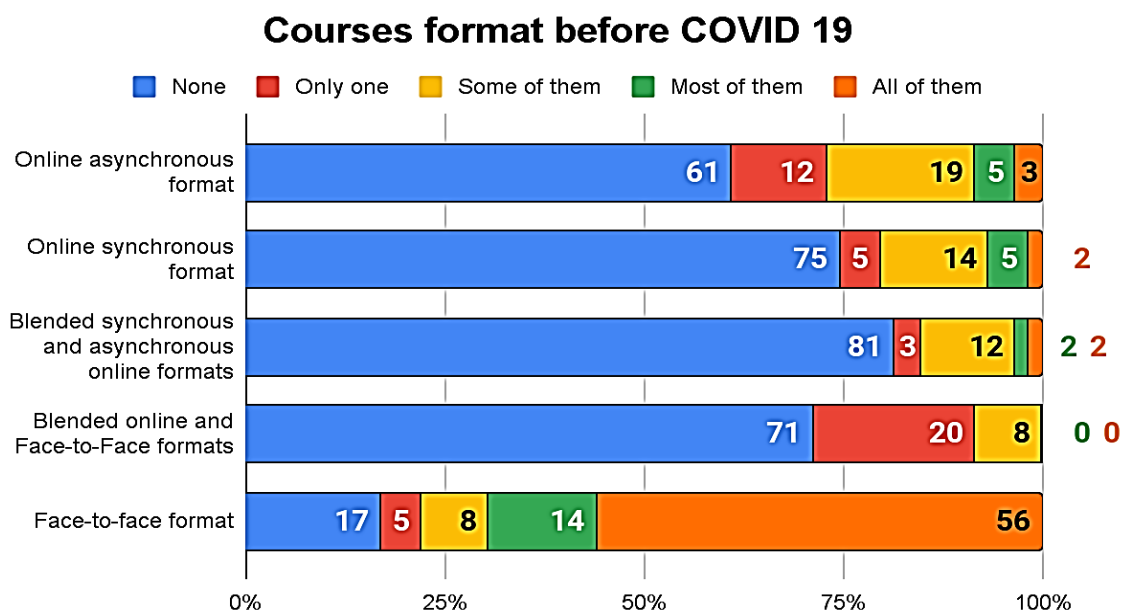
82% of French speaking respondents studied only in French.

Field of learning. Most respondents (69%) were in VET training. The main part of VET learners were undergraduate learners (44%), followed by continuous training in the workplace (20%) and by under A-level (5%). 31% of respondents selected an academic option, divided between postgraduate learners (17% of total) and undergraduate learners (14% of total). The 4 Spanish respondents were all following an academic training.

Educational level. In terms of educational background 38% of the participants reported to hold a undergraduate degree (i.e. Bachelor), 29% reported to hold a postgraduate degree (i.e. Master), 16% reported to have a postsecondary non-university degree, 10% a A level degree, 5% an under A level degree, and one participant had a PhD.

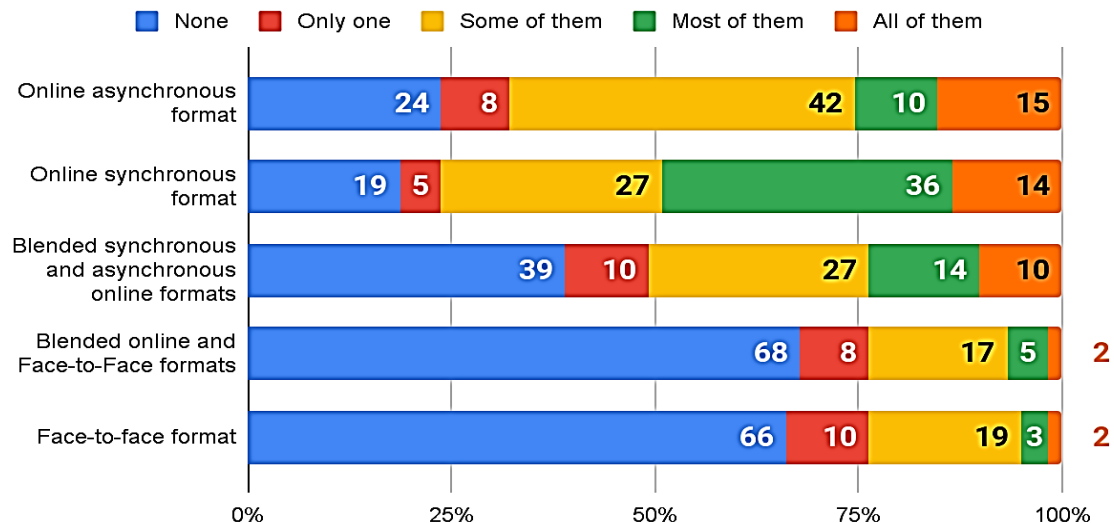
Learning formats before COVID-19 and during COVID-19

In terms of learning formats, 56% never studied online before COVID 19, 39% had experience of online asynchronous training and 25% experience synchronous online training.



During COVID 19 there was an important shift to online synchronous and asynchronous formats, blended formats (asynchronous and synchronous, online and face-to-face) were also present. Only one of the participants had all their classes in face-to-face format, 66% had no face-to-face at all.

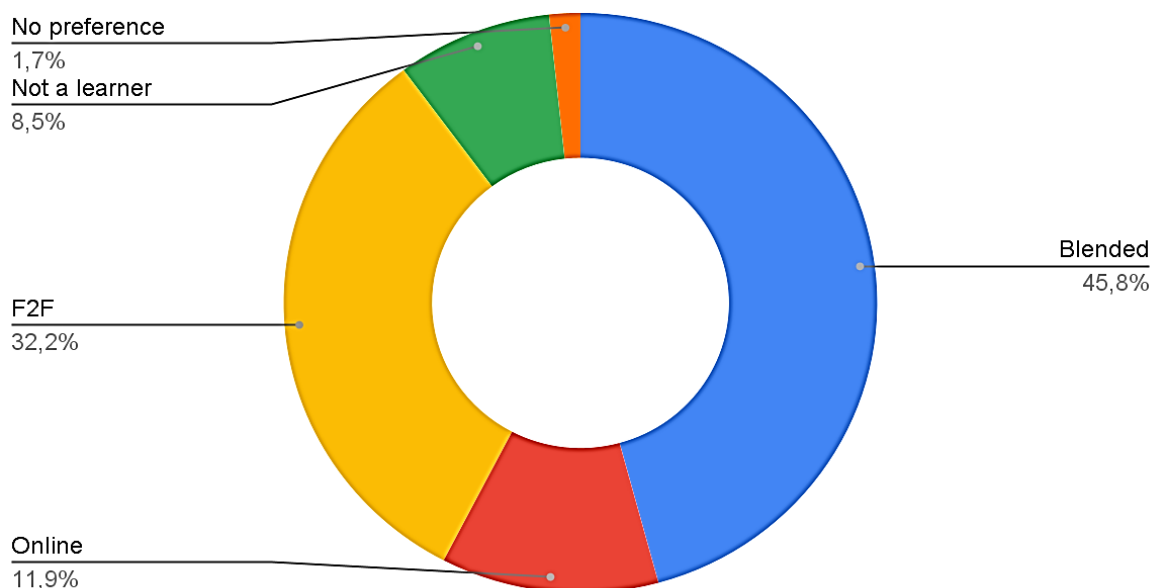
Courses format during COVID 19



Learning preferences

For this academic year (2021-22) and in the near future, the most preferred option is a blended format between face-to-face and online (46%). 32% of participants would like to return to a face-to-face format for all their courses, while 12% would like to remain completely in online formats. One participant had no preferences, and 9% were not learners anymore this year.

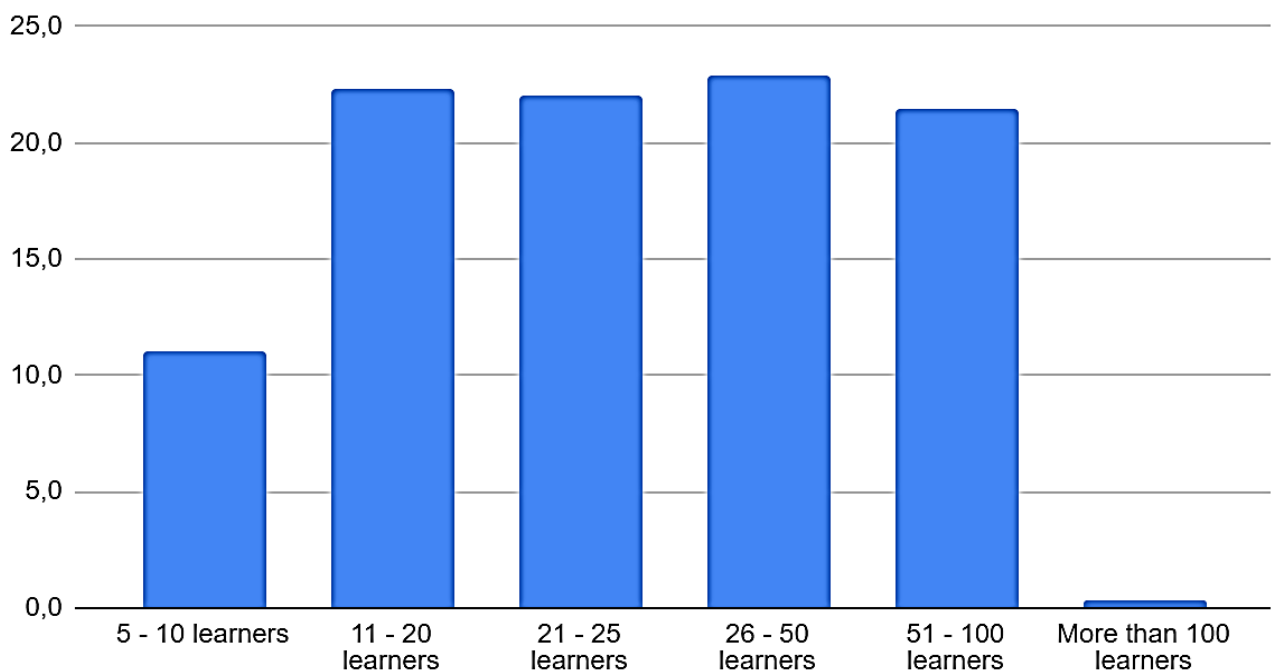
Learning preferences



Average enrolment in online courses

On average the category 11-20 learners, 21-25 learners, 26-50 learners, and 51-100 learners were all reported between 21 and 23%. 10% of participants reported having between 5-10 learners, and one has more than 100 in some of their courses. All the Spanish respondents were in 21-25 learners classes.

Average enrolment in online courses



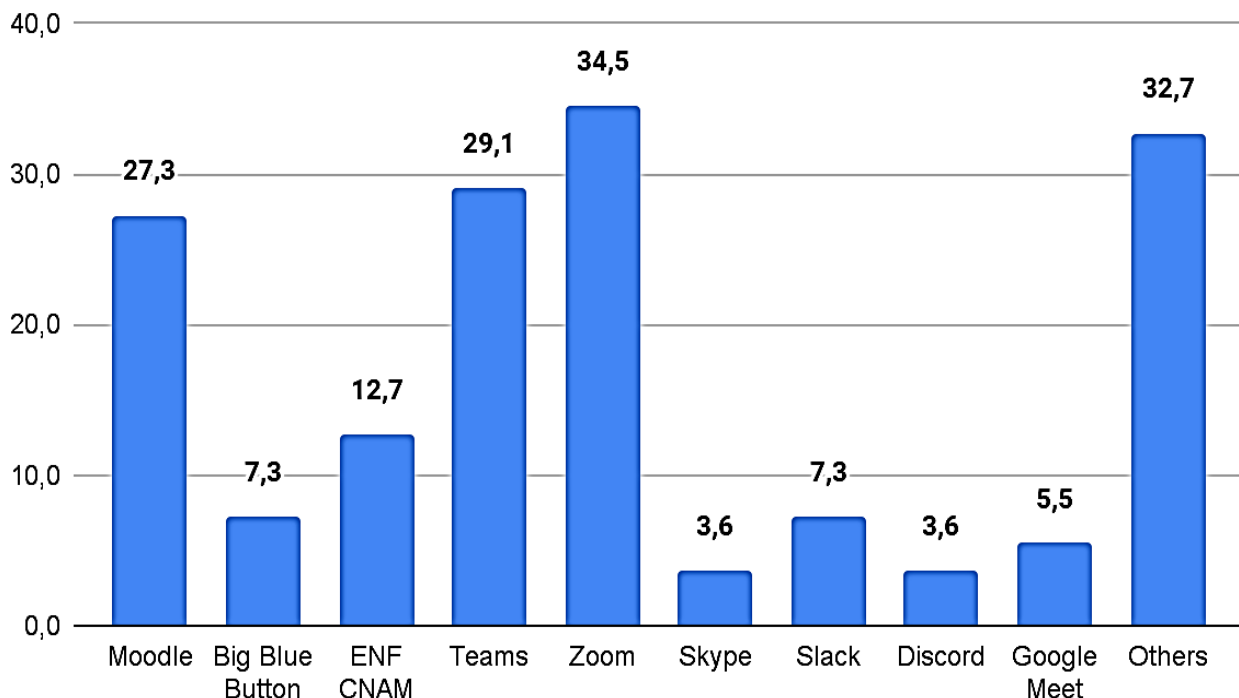
1. Accessibility and inclusion in online courses

Online platforms and systems and problematic aspects

Most learners (67%) reported to use more than one platform/system for their online learning activities during COVID-19.

In terms of online teaching platforms and systems, the reported most used platforms were: Zoom, Teams and Moodle. Zoom is a platform mostly used for synchronous online format, Moodle is a platform mostly used for asynchronous online format, and Microsoft Teams allows for both formats.

Online platforms

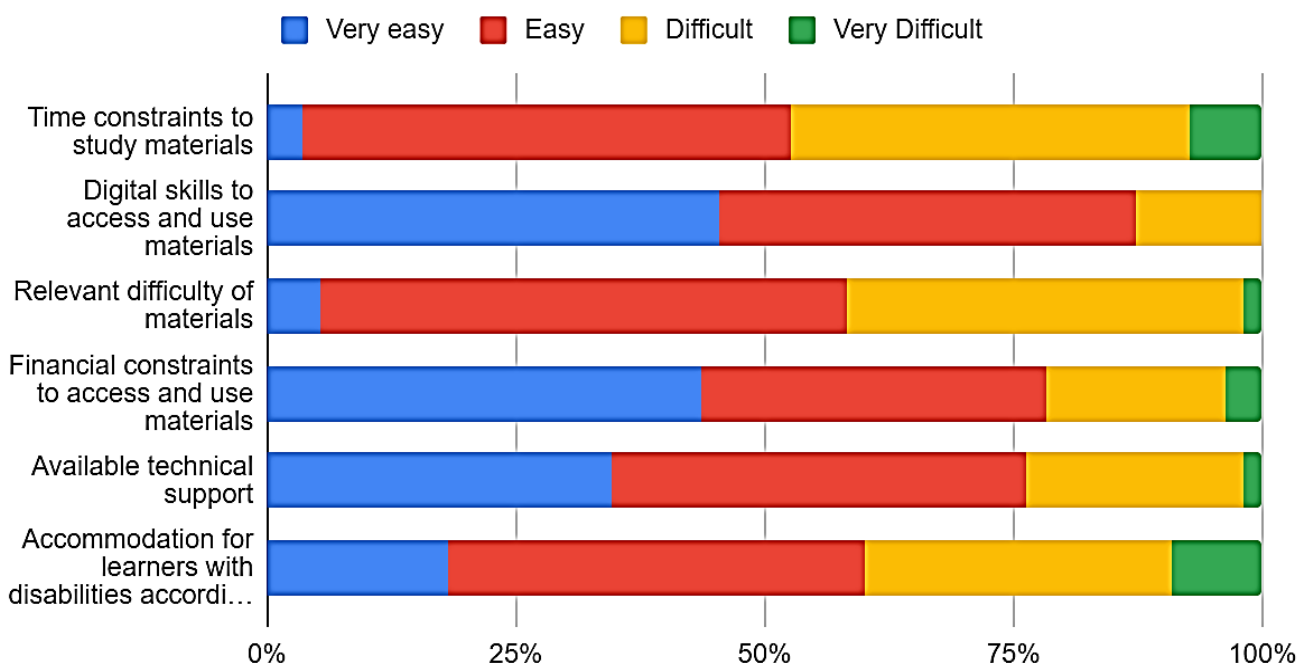


Levels of difficulty or easiness to deal with different aspects when using the online platform/system

In terms of difficulty and easiness to deal with the different aspects in the given learning platforms and systems, the reported “difficult” and “very difficult” aspects were first “Time constraints to study materials (47%), followed by “Relevant difficulty of material” (42%) followed by “Accommodation measures for learners with disabilities according to disability laws” (40%).

The biggest reported proportions of “easy” or “very easy” aspects were in first place “Digital skills to access and use materials” (87%), followed by “Financial constraints to access and use materials” (79%), and “Available technical support” (77%). See table next page.

Levels of difficulty or easiness to deal with different aspects when using the online platform/system



Competences: Inclusion aspects taken into account

The 6 evaluated competencies were:

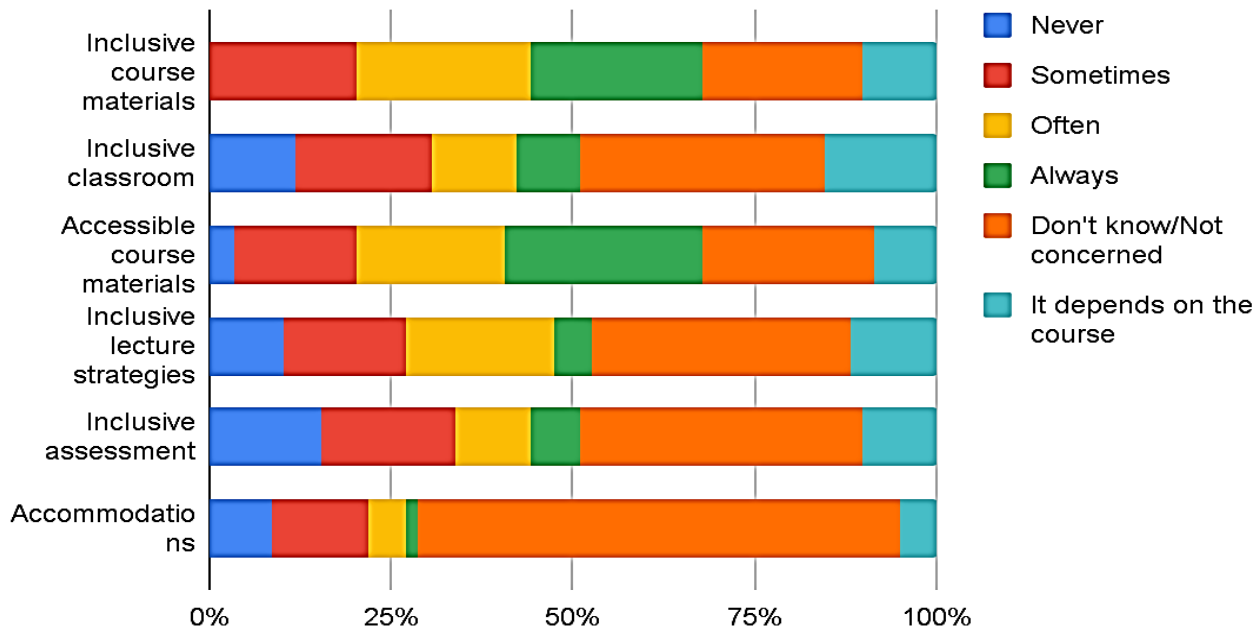
1. Inclusive Course materials
2. Inclusive Classroom
3. Accessible Course materials
4. Inclusive lecture strategies
5. Inclusive assessment
6. Accommodations for persons with disabilities

When asked if these aspects were taken into account in their online courses, 66% reported that they didn't know or were not concerned for/by "Accommodations for persons with disabilities".

For the other aspects, we determined if the learners gave a bigger proportion of negative ("Never", "Sometimes") or positive ("Often" and "Always") answers, without taking into account the "It depends on the course" answers:

- "Inclusive course materials" and "Accessible course materials" have positive reports (70% of positive answers both)
- "Inclusive classroom" and "Inclusive assessment" have negative reports (60 and 67% of negative answers respectively)
- "Inclusive lecture strategies" have a neutral report (52% negative)

Inclusion aspects taken into account



The respondents were also asked more specific questions on the different competencies. These questions allowed the highlight of some difficulties the learners encountered.

1. Inclusive course materials: not enough diversity of online instructional formats: 42%
2. Inclusive classroom:
 - Course information not available in multiple formats: 36%
 - Modules and reading assignments not supplemented with visual aids: 42%
 - Course material not available in a variety of formats: 47%
3. Accessible course materials:
 - All video clips in my course(s) have not been captioned/subtitled: 66%
 - Electronic versions of course handouts do not contain alternative text (alt text) on all images: 54%
4. Inclusive lecture strategies:
 - Key points are not summarised in each online class module: 47%
 - Online course materials do present with instructional barriers: 42%
5. Inclusive assessment:
 - Not allowed to express comprehension in multiple ways: 51%
 - Not allowed to demonstrate my knowledge and skills in ways other than traditional tests and exams : 64%
 - Can't request flexibility with assignment deadlines if I express a need: 68%
6. Accommodations for persons with disabilities: 90 to 93% of respondents reported that they were not concerned

Advantages and disadvantages

Concerning the advantages, learners may find time scheduling easier, especially with asynchronous learning, and especially if they are workers. Other notable advantages are the disponibility of materials and the travelling time savings.

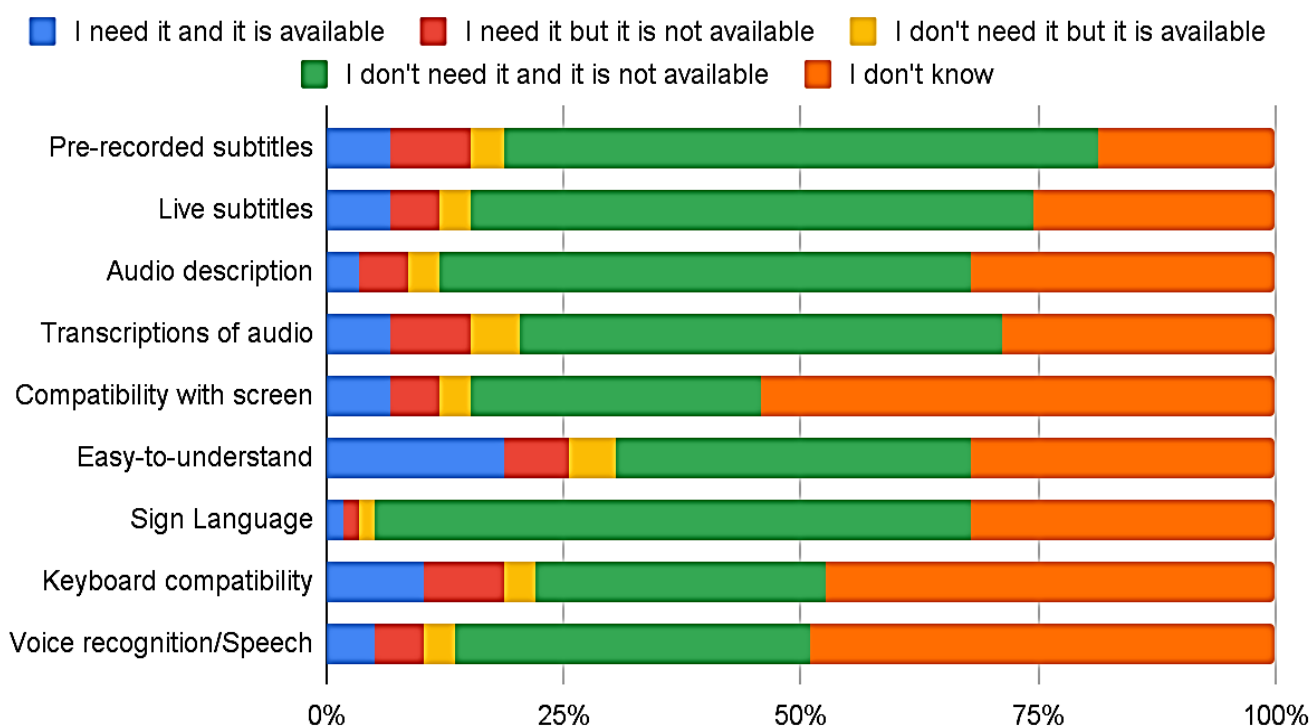
Technical issues are the first reported disadvantages, mainly a bad Internet connection, but also bad design platform.

The learners also regretted a lesser variety of features than in face-to-face training, which is coherent with previous results (see part “Competences: Inclusion aspects taken into account”).

Accessibility services

At least 81% of learners either didn't need accessibility features (between 41 and 66%) or didn't know (between 19 and 54%) if they were available. The highest proportion of “I don't know” answers were for keyboard compatibility, compatibility with screen readers and voice recognition/speech, the lowest was for prerecorded subtitles. When the learners reported they knew, the majority (between 65 and 95%) said the services were not available. Sign language is the least provided service.

Accessibility services

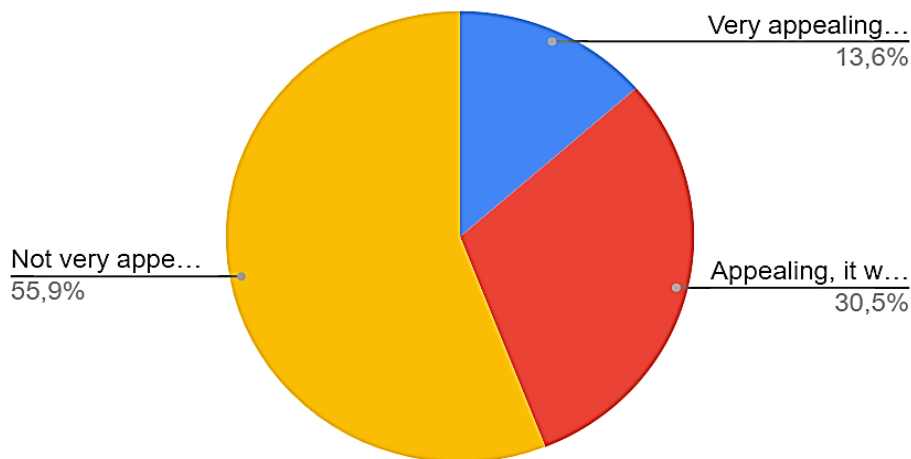


Interest in competences and certification

A majority (56%) of the respondents found the certification “Not very appealing, it would not be a criterion for [their] choice of training”, 30% described it as “Appealing, it would somehow influence [their] choice for a training” and 14% said it was “Very appealing, it would influence [their] choice for a training a lot.

These results could be due to the fact that more than 90% of the respondents were not concerned by “Accommodations for persons with disabilities” and therefore don’t have a particular need for inclusion.

Interested in certification



4.2.3. Conclusions extracted from the questionnaire

In terms of demographics, the respondents of the survey were :

- Mostly young (54% under 34)
- Females (76%)
- Mainly in VET courses (68%)
- Before Covid 19:
 - 56% never studied online
 - 39% had some experience (asynchronous)
 - 25% had full experience (synchronous)

According to the survey, the majority of learners preferred a blended format with face-to-face and online learning. In addition, there were main advantages and disadvantages reported on online learning: advantages included time scheduling and saving travel time, and disadvantages included technical issues such as bad internet connection and bad platform design.

In terms of platforms for online teaching, the reported most used platforms and systems were: Microsoft Teams, Moodle and Zoom.

Most learners reported to use more than one platform/system for their online learning during COVID-19.

The most difficult aspects to deal with in the given platform/system were: “time constraints to study materials”, “relevant difficulty of material” and “accommodation measures for learners with disabilities according to disability laws”.

This highlights the need to train teaching professionals to adapt to the learning rhythms imposed by online learning formats, and to effectively manage the available accessibility features of the given platforms/systems.

These issues were further explored in the focus groups and are reported in the next section. The practises following competences were reported to be unevenly taken into account:

- “Inclusive course materials” and “Accessible course materials” were reported to be more often taken into account than not
- “Inclusive classroom” and “Inclusive assessment” were reported to be less often taken into account than not
- “Inclusive lecture strategies” was about as frequently taken into account than not
- The majority reported that they didn’t know or were not concerned for “Accommodations for persons with disabilities”.

Concerning this last particular competence, the following results brought complementary information.

In terms of available accessibility services in online teaching, the majority of respondents either did not need accessibility features or did not know if they were available. When they reported they knew, the majority said the services were not available. Sign language is the least provided service.

It is important to take this information in consideration while examining the answers. Indeed learners with disabilities are the ones who are most likely to benefit from better inclusion and accessibility in online teaching.

Focus groups were later organised to compensate for this bias and for the gender bias, by looking for a bigger proportion of people with disabilities in the participants and looking for gender balance.

According to feedback received from teaching participants in IO2 surveys, while there is a clear interest in the proposed competences described in the online survey, a more comprehensive definition should be provided.

As a result, a renaming of the competences in line with previous Erasmus+ projects was agreed by the IDE@ partners, and is provided below:

1. Understand diversity in online teaching (inclusive classroom and inclusive course materials)
2. Plan and evaluate accessibility in online teaching (accommodation measures)
3. Design and create accessible online course materials (accessible course materials)
4. Manage diversity in online teaching (inclusive lecture strategies and inclusive assessment)

In order to validate these new defined competences, focus groups including teachers with experience with students with disabilities, were conducted and are reported in the next section.

4.3. Focus groups

Three focus groups were carried out online:

- A focus group for learners in France, in French on December 17th 2021 from 8:00 - 9:30 CET
- A focus group for international students, in English on January 3rd 2022 from 14:00 - 15:30 CET
- A focus group for students in Spain, in Spanish/Catalan on January 11th 2022 from 10:00-11:00 CET

In the first two focus groups the video conference platform used was Zoom. In the third focus group it was Microsoft Teams.

The procedure to organise the focus groups was as follows:

First, the most relevant questions were selected from the survey, since the objective of the focus groups is to provide a deeper understanding of the survey's answers.

Second, a set of criteria was determined for the recruitment of participants. Participants had to have experienced online learning and had to be able to speak French, English, or Spanish/Catalan, depending on the group they were participating in.

Questionnaires were prepared and sent to potential participants and universities, to provide their contact information and sign up to the focus group. The students who were interested were then contacted and provided with the date and time of the focus group.

While recruiting, two important factors were taken into consideration, to compensate for the weaknesses of the survey's answers ; the necessity of recruiting participants with disabilities and the importance of the presence of learners of both genders.

A consent form was sent for signing to the participants before the meeting, presenting the project, explaining the objective of the focus group and detailing the right to anonymity and the usage of the collected data.

A short presentation was used during the meeting, it contained a brief introduction of the project, followed by the 5 questions that were selected to conduct the discussion. Participants answered the questions orally, notes were taken by the research team, and after each question, participants confirmed the accuracy of these notes. The meetings were not recorded.

The questions were are as follows :

1. As a student during the COVID 19, which were the main challenges you faced while studying online?
2. Inclusion and accessibility is about including everyone, disabled and non-disabled persons in a universal design approach, without any barrier. Giving this definition, what should be an inclusive teacher for you?
3. In an ideal online class, what should be done to make it inclusive? Which accessibility services should be provided?
4. On a scale from 1 to 10, 10 being maximum and 1 minimum, how important do you think the following skills are?
 - a. Understand diversity in online teaching
 - b. Plan and evaluate accessibility in online teaching
 - c. Design and create accessible course materials in online teaching
 - d. Manage diversity in online teaching
5. Which added value do you think a certified teacher on inclusive and accessible training could bring compared to a non-certified one?

4.3.1. Analysis of learner feedback – French focus group

4.3.1.1. Demographic data

The focus group had six participants. There were 3 females and 3 males. They all reported to currently work or study and live in France. They all experienced online learning during COVID-19.

In terms of educational context, 5 participants reported to have learnt in vocational training during the COVID period, 1 participant in both vocational training and university. Among the participants, 3 have a disability: 2 are visually impaired and one has dyslexia.

4.3.1.2. Focus group validated conclusions

Question 1: As a student during the COVID 19, which were the main challenges you faced while studying online?

On one hand, the participants addressed three main issues :

a. Online learning environment and tools

Connection issues were reported by half the participants, both hardware and software problems were reported as well. Several participants had issues involving their workspace, since they had to share their living space with other people during the lockdown, people who themselves could be using video conferences.

b. Organisation problems, due to insufficient preparation or lack of adaptation

With the forced shift to online learning, there was a lot of space for improvisation, and no sufficient time for adaptation. Course materials that were designed to be taught face-to-face, were not suitable for distance training.

The course schedules remained the same, which was also unsuitable to online learning.

One participant complained about the lack of interactivity in online classes that required them, such as language classes. They also pointed out the issue of assessment, as teachers attempted to integrate different obstacles during online exams to prevent cheating, which was not efficient nor adapted to online assessment, and induced stress for the learners.

c. Lack of accessibility

The participant who is dyslexic reported that written communication with teachers during courses was used more frequently than in face-to-face formats, which was an added difficulty for them.

The visually impaired participants explained that during some of their courses, the used softwares and contents were not all accessible.

On the other hand, visually impaired learners declared that online learning had advantages: since it is really demanding for visually impaired people to take public transportation during rush hours to participate in their classes, online learning was a less energy consuming alternative.

It also allowed more flexibility in scheduling and a quieter environment than in face to face, where noise can deteriorate visually impaired learners' experience.

Question 2: Inclusion and accessibility is about including everyone, disabled and non-disabled persons in a universal design approach, without any barrier. **Given this definition, what should be an inclusive teacher for you?**

The participants talked about 3 main characteristics for an inclusive teacher :

1. **Proactive** : For the participants an inclusive teacher is a proactive one who does research on their students' needs, by asking the educational structure or the students themselves. It is also a teacher who can create a climate of trust so the students feel safe to talk about their needs and situations.
2. **Adaptive** : Once the needs of students are determined, the teacher can then adapt their contents and practises.
3. **Trained and aware** : The visually impaired participants emphasised the need for the inclusive teacher to be trained in digital accessibility, to know the difficulties the students with disabilities face and the assistive technologies they need, and the susceptibility to tiredness these technologies can induce.

Question 3: In an ideal online class, what should be done to make it inclusive? Which accessibility services should be provided?

Subtitles was the only specific accessibility service mentioned, but the participants proposed a series of other features.

The participants emphasised on the need for teachers to be trained on digital accessibility so they can produce accessible contents. The participant with dyslexia said that an inclusive material should be well spaced out, with a good text font and colour.

Printed summaries should also be given to the students so that the content is rephrased and to help prevent screen induced fatigability. The digital files also must be readable with a text reader and the relevant pictures must have alternative text.

The need for more breaks was also pointed out as synchronous classes are more tiring than face to face.

Participants with visual impairments explained that online classes should be on platforms that allow participation via smartphones, so that people with assistive technologies on their computer, especially screen readers, while participating in class.

Question 4: On a scale from 1 to 10 (10 being maximum and 1 minimum), how important do you think the following skills are?

	Understand diversity in online teaching	Plan and evaluate accessibility in online teaching	Design and create accessible course materials in online teaching	Manage diversity in online 2 teaching
Average	8,2	9,2	9,7	8,2
Standard deviation	1,72	1,60	0,82	0,75

Question 5: Which added value do you think a certified teacher on inclusive and accessible training could bring compared to a non-certified one?

A certified teacher is aware of disability issues and knows accessibility. The certification can give credibility to the teacher and is reassuring to the learners. One participant said that a trained teacher would provide a better experience to the learners, but that the certification is not required. Another said that a certified teacher could be an ambassador of the « inclusive classes » idea to other people.

4.3.2. Analysis of learner feedback – International focus group

4.3.2.1. Demographic data

The focus group had 5 participants. There were 3 females and 2 males. 2 of them study in France, while the other 3 respectively study in Egypt, Germany and Scotland. They have all experienced online learning during COVID-19.

In terms of educational context, 4 participants reported to have learnt in university during the COVID period, 1 participant in both vocational training and university. None have a disability.

4.3.2.2. Focus group validated conclusions

Question 1: As a student during the COVID 19, which were the main challenges you faced while studying online?

1. Unadapted rhythm from in-person to online classes:

3 participants mentioned a higher fatigability due to the use of video conferences tools (« Zoom fatigue ») and the question of online learning rhythm was also reported. Some teachers just read their slides and notes which did not help the learners' focus. It especially occurred at the beginning of COVID 19, when the teaching was not yet adapted to the online format.

2. Lack of interaction and communication with teachers:

Several participants noted a lack of interaction during the classes. One pointed out an overall lack of communication, for example regarding how the exams were going to be made, which added to the uncertainties of an already very uncertain context. This participant also said that both teachers and learners put less effort in online classes than face-to-face ones.

3. Organisation problems:

Another participant said that there was cheating during the exams and that teachers did not respect the schedule, which disturbed the participant.

Question 2: Inclusion and accessibility is about including everyone, disabled and non-disabled persons in a universal design approach, without any barrier. Given this definition, what should be an inclusive trainer for you?

1. Aware: An inclusive online trainer should be aware of the learners' needs, for example by asking them. A participant added that an inclusive teacher should be aware of the different disabilities and up to date on recent research.

2. Possesses communication skills: Learners said that communication skills are important, for both knowledge transmission during class and to create a space where learners can express their needs. Only one participant said that their university gave the students the space to express their needs and had a formal process to report them.

3. Adaptive : Once the needs identified, teachers should adapt to them. One participant reported the concern about rhythm and length of online classes, which are more tiring than face-to-face classes. A participant gave an example of an obstacle caused by the lack of adaptability of trainers: « Some exams required having 2 screens and cameras (notes: so the trainer could check if the learner cheated), it was to accommodate teachers and not students. If you lost your connection or your camera was turned off, you can be dropped from your class. »

Question 3: In an ideal online class, what should be done to make it inclusive? Which accessibility services should be provided?

One participant proposed to provide the script for lecture and image description in the course materials. Three participants proposed to record the lecture, so that learners can go back to it and learn at their own pace, for a hybrid synchronous/asynchronous format.

Other propositions that were discussed were giving a proper overview of the course, as well as an organised and well divided content, and making them available so learners can consult them.

In addition, a participant mentioned the importance of pausing and asking learners if they understand the content, thus monitoring the students' understanding of contents.

Another participant explained that teachers should have the needed recording materials, such as several cameras, so that freehand writing and drawing can be properly seen online, alongside the teacher explaining.

The participant studying in Scotland, explained how her course materials are provided in diverse formats, to accommodate different needs and comprehensions. For example, a course could have classic resources such as articles, alongside films, podcasts and images.

Question 4: On a scale from 1 to 10, 10 being maximum and 1 minimum, how important do you think the following skills are?

	Understand diversity in online teaching	Plan and evaluate accessibility in online teaching	Design and create accessible course materials in online teaching	Manage diversity in online teaching
Average	10,0	9,4	8,2	8,2
Standard deviation	0,00	0,89	0,84	1,10

Question 5: Which added value do you think a certified teacher on inclusive and accessible training could bring compared to a non-certified one?

Most participants agreed that a certified teacher would have better knowledge of their needs and so better accommodate them. Students would be reassured and comforted and have an easier course.

Two participants agreed that the certification would be pointless if the teacher does not implement what he/she was trained for. Communication and organisation skills and giving organised courses are also important features.

4.3.3 Analysis of learner feedback – Spanish/Catalan focus group

4.3.3.1. Demographic data

The focus group had six participants, 3 females and 3 male. 5 participants reported to currently study online and live in Spain, and 1 participant reported to study online in Spain and live in Perú. They were all learners with experience in online learning during COVID-19.

In terms of educational context, 3 participants were involved in a vocational training course and 3 participants were involved in a master degree at the UAB university.

One participant reported to have a disability related to mental health, and one participant reported to work in an organisation with people with cognitive disabilities. One participant reported to work with people who are deaf and hard of hearing.

4.3.3.2. Focus group validated conclusions

Question 1: As a student during the COVID 19, which were the main challenges you faced while studying online?

Participants discussed 3 main issues :

1. Online learning environment and tools

3 of the participants talked about technical problems, such as internet connection problems that affected the quality of their learning process and their ability to participate. One participant explained that sometimes learners or teachers would not show a presentation due to their connection, or that their audio would be missing.

The participant living in Peru also explained that the different time zones were a problem to them while taking online classes taught in Spain.

2. Unfamiliarity of students and teachers of online learning platforms

5 of the learners highlighted the lack of familiarity and experience they had with online learning platforms. Some of them were “afraid” of these new tools, and others said that it was necessary to take time to learn how to use them, which they didn’t always have.

However, one of the participants expressed that with time to adapt to online learning tools, they now prefer it.

3. Lack of interactions in classes

One participant mentioned to lack speed in online classes, which led to them not being very participative. They explained that during online classes, the interactions are fast, and they cannot keep up. Whereas in face-to-face classes, participation occurs at the same time for everybody.

Question 2: Inclusion and accessibility is about including everyone, disabled and non-disabled persons in a universal design approach, without any barrier. **Given this definition, what should be an inclusive teacher for you?**

1. **Adaptive** : Most participants declared that for them an inclusive teacher should be able to handle and adapt to the needs of learners.
2. **Aware** : An inclusive teacher is aware of the learner's needs and is able to include them in the class.
3. **Provides accessible content** : An inclusive teacher is someone who can provide accessible learning material for students who need it. Half the participants reported they would prefer a personalised approach toward accessibility. They pointed out the lack of need for adaptation if there were no learners with disability, and also that adaptations in Easy-to-Read or Plain Language would lead to have too much number of pages. They considered that adding too many accessibility services may actually make lessons less accessible for the learners that don't need these services.

Question 3: In an ideal online class, what should be done to make it inclusive? Which accessibility services should be provided?

The majority of participants agreed that accessibility services should fit the learners' needs, needs that should be asked to the learners or expressed by learners in some way.

Half the participants reported that the accessibility services needed depend on whether it is a guided or non guided course or on the field of study.

- In non-guided online training (like MOOCs) accessibility services should always be included because you don't know the type of learners that you have in your courses.
- In online guided training synchronous and asynchronous accessibility services should be provided according to the learner's requests and needs. One learner pointed out that unneeded accessibility services could be a barrier.

Specific accessibility services reported were screen readers compatibility, subtitles, transcriptions, live subtitles and easy to understand language.

One participant said that assessments should be compatible with assistive technologies.

One participant mentioned the future increasing role of VR in education, and that these ICT tools should already incorporate all accessibility features.

Question 4: On a scale from 1 to 10 (10 being maximum and 1 minimum), how important do you think the following skills are?

	Understand diversity in online teaching	Plan and evaluate accessibility in online teaching	Design and create accessible course materials in online teaching	Manage diversity in online teaching
Average	9,3	9,7	9,8	9,0
Standard deviation	0,82	0,52	0,41	1,26

2 participants added that it would be good to apply these competences for face-to-face teaching and learning, one proposed to add the competence « Responsiveness: capacity to adapt to unforeseen difficulties ».

Question 5: Which added value do you think a certified teacher on inclusive and accessible training could bring compared to a non-certified one?

There was a consensus that certified teachers are important to learners. Two reasons in particular were raised by the participants:

1. Accessible material:

Participants explained that with a certified teacher on inclusive and accessible training, there is a guarantee that the teaching materials will be accessible for all learners.

Such a certificate will ensure to students that their teachers have the knowledge and competences to provide accessible and inclusive online teaching, which to them, is better than non certified teachers.

2. The institution's reputation:

Participants explained that they would opt for teachers who have this certification, one of them explained that it would improve the institution's reputation.

Another participant added that a certified teacher on inclusive and accessible training could be an example for other educational institutions, which would encourage other institutions and teachers to get certified.

4.3.4 Conclusions extracted from the focus groups

The answers and discussions during the different focus groups reflected the priorities and needs of its participants. Therefore the importance of accessibility in online learning was highlighted in the french and spanish groups, who had participants with disabilities.

The challenges faced by the learners were for the most part similar ; technical problems related to internet connections, lack of familiarity with online tools and organisation problems due to the fast shift between in person and online classes.

These problems were also encountered by respondents to the survey. Many participants expressed the difficulty to interact and participate during online classes. They also explained that exams and evaluations became more challenging in the online format, which echoes the negative view of online assessments in the survey.

Participants with particular accessibility needs reported that the course materials were not always accessible and that the rythm didn't always suit their needs for concentration, which is coherent with the results from the survey, where accessibility services were reported to be not available most of the time. Teachers lacked the proper tools and knowledge to provide them with a comfortable learning experience.

Some terms were always present when the learners were asked about the qualities of an inclusive teacher. Adaptability and awareness were the most common features that were mentioned, as learners thought it was important for teachers to be able to understand the different needs in a classroom, and be capable of accommodating them. This can be achieved by proper training.

An inclusive teacher should also be proactive and create an environment where learners can communicate their needs.

Participants pointed out that a certified teacher would have more credibility and will give its institution a good reputation. If the learned skills are implemented by teachers, the overall experience of the learners will improve, as they will be able to provide accessible materials, which will be reassuring for the learners who need them.

As for the accessibility services that were requested or deemed important for learners, they reflected the personal needs of the participants. They included: screen readers compatibility for the course materials and assessments, recordings and transcripts of classes, adapting the schedule and rhythm of the classes, providing different types of course materials (written, audio visual, etc).

There was a visible gap between the experience of students in European countries such as France, Germany and Spain, and the students who studied in the UK. It appeared that the UK university had more awareness and was more prepared to respond to the students' accessibility needs.

When asked to evaluate the importance of certain skills on a scale from 1 to 10, the answers of the learners, once again reflected their personal needs. For example, in the French group, where many participants had disabilities, the skill that had the highest average was "Design and create accessible course materials in online teaching".

In the group with international students, the skill that was most valued was "Understand diversity in online teaching".

Overall, participants agreed on the importance of adapting in-person courses to the online format, as they require a different organisation, which was not taken into consideration by their institutions at the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis. The need for a formal and organised communication process to report disabilities and/or needs is also important for learners.

5. Results

The findings discussed in this report contribute to the IDE@ project's global objective of establishing the professional profile and competencies for a "Trainer in accessible and inclusive Distance Learning".

This is achieved by providing an overview of the current teaching practises in distance education from the perspectives of learners related to online teaching across different countries, identifying gaps and good practises.

These findings feed directly into the subsequent stages of the project, including the definition and assessment of skills required for a "Trainer in accessible and inclusive Distance Learning".

The results confirm a gap in the need and interest in the proposed certification between learners without disabilities and learners with disabilities. In short, there is a need among learners for the training being developed as part of subsequent stages of the IDE@ project, but most of the learners without disabilities probably will not feel concerned.

6. Next steps

The findings discussed in this report contribute to the IDE@ project's global objective of establishing the certified professional profile "Trainer in accessible and inclusive Distance Learning".

7. Dissemination

The work conducted in this OI has been presented and reported at:

May 2021: eNEM (Plataforma de Tecnologías Multimedia y Contenidos Digitales) in Spanish <https://enem.ametic.es/proyectos/>

July 2021: Presentation at AVANCA | CINEMA 2022 International Conference Cinema - Art, Technology, Communication (online Portugal): <https://www.avanca.org/EN/inicio.php>

Publication of a research paper: "[Training professionals to improve media accessibility](#)"

Nov. 2021: Poster presentation at II International Congress of Teaching Innovation and Research in Higher Education (CIDICO) (online)

<https://cidico.es/>

Presentation at Life Long Learning seminar (online)

Presentation at the UDeL conference (online) <https://www.hamk.fi/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Short-agenda-UDeL-Conference.pdf>

Feb. 2022: Presentation at the Unlimited3! conference Innovation for access: New interactions (online)

<https://www.opentoegankelijk.be/en/activities/unlimited-3-innovation-for-access-new-interactions>

8. Annex I

Unit 1	Elements
Understand diversity in online teaching	E1. Identify the criteria of accessibility in distance learning
	E2. Identify the factors of variability among learners and their consequences on online learning
Unit 2	Elements
Plan and evaluate accessibility in online teaching	E1. Plan an adapted, accessible online teaching
	E2. Evaluate online teaching
Unit 3	Elements
Design and create accessible online course materials	E1. Create accessible online materials
	E2. Design an accessible online path
Unit 4	Elements
Manage diversity in online teaching	E1. Organise the distant presence
	E2. Interact with the learners

Table 1. List of competences of the « Competence framework for a trainer in accessible and inclusive distance learning »

9. Annex II - Online survey (English version)

Attached to this report, a PDF version of the questionnaire.

10. Annex III - Consent forms (English version)

Informed consent form (18 years and older)

Research project name : IDE@

Please read this consent form carefully before participating in this study.

Identification: Researchers in charge of the focus group :

- Armony Altinier, Koena founder and CEO
- Clément Garénaux, digital inclusion consultant and researcher at Koena
- Amy Khairalla, digital accessibility educator at Koena

Mail address : projets@koena.net

Research objective: Ide@ is a ERASMUS+ project with 5 partners:

- KOENA
- GIP-FCIP de l'académie de Créteil
- Université TELUQ (Canada)
- Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona
- European Certification & Qualification association (ECQA, Austria)

The project aims to learn from the COVID crisis, the associated lockdowns in each country and the mass switch to e-learning to gather the best practices concerning digital accessibility.

The objective of the project is to train educational teams to distance education to allow a true efficient and inclusive pedagogical method, in order for it to become as accessible as possible, using appropriate tools and relevant training paths to ensure the inclusion of all learners.

Your participation in the study implies : The participation in the focus group will be via video conference. Two or three members from the Koena research team will be present at the meeting. The participant will have to answer questions orally and discuss them with the other participants. Your collaboration is an important part of the success of this project and we would like to thank you for agreeing to participate.

Duration. The focus group will last approximately 90 minutes.

Risks and benefits. Your participation does not pose any risk of any sort.

Confidentiality. If you agree to participate, your identity will remain confidential. Pseudonyms will always be used to identify the participants in the notes taken during the meeting. This informed consent form will be kept in a safe place by the main researchers and will be deleted five after the end of the project, which is on 02/28/2028.

When the project is finished and all the data is analysed, all the notes and observations made by the researchers will be anonymised and will stay at the disposal of the researchers from Koena.

Voluntary participation. The participation in this study is entirely voluntary. There is no penalty if you don't want to participate.

Right of Withdrawal from the study. You can withdraw from the study at any time without having to explain yourself and without negative consequences: just by telling us by any means of communication. You can exercise your Right of Withdrawal in accordance with the European General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) by sending a request to Rachel Le Roux, Koena's delegate to Data protection with a copy of your ID card attached in the mail.

You can also fill a complaint to the *Commission Nationale Informatique et Libertés* (CNIL) at the following URL : <https://www.cnil.fr/>

Subsequent publication / reuse / other basic data analysis and period of storage. The anonymised results of the focus group will be used in the reports produced and published for the IDE@ project. During that period, the data will not be used by organisations other than the partners of the IDE@ project. Five years after the end of the project, the research data will be anonymised and put at the disposal of other researchers.

Personal identifiers will be deleted. Otherwise, the information can remain confidential with a legal agreement - only giving access to the researchers who sign this consent form.

Contact person. For additional questions about your rights as a research participant and the organisation of the focus group, you can contact Armony Altinier on direction@koena.net to ask for more information on the project and its results.

Consent:

- I agree to participate in the focus group and I have received a copy of this consent form.
- I read the information explaining the research project and I had the opportunity to ask questions to which I was given satisfying answers.
- I understand that the anonymised information of this project may be put at the disposal of other researchers after the end of the project.
- I consent to the quoting of my contributions without any mention of my name.
- I consent to the use of my contributions for scientific dissemination, under the condition that actions are taken to protect my privacy.



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