UAB

Universitat Autònoma
de Barcelona

IDE@

IMPLEMENTING A
DIGITAL
E-LEARNING
ALTERNATIVE

INTELLECTUAL OUTPUT 2

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

koena

RÉPUBLIQUE
FRANÇAISE
Liberté
Égalité
Fraternité

)CAFOC)))
GIP FCIP
ACADÉMIE DE CRÉTEIL

UNIVERSITÉ
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1. Introduction

Digital accessibility and inclusive learning are the central axes of the IDE@ project, that 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 IO2. 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 2 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 teacher'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)

- Numbers of participating teachers with experience in online teaching during COVID-19 – number of responses to online questionnaire: 63
- Numbers of participating teachers from higher education– number of responses to online questionnaire: 32
- Numbers of participating teachers from vocational training – number of responses to online questionnaire: 31
- Number of participating teachers with possible interested in the proposed training - number of responses to online questionnaire: 56
- Total number of participants - number of responses to questionnaires: 63

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 IO2 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. Ethical procedures were strictly followed at all stages in order to ensure compliance with EU General Data Protection Regulation and codes of conduct. In April 2021, UAB submitted the documentation for approval to the UAB Ethical Committee (https://www.uab.cat/web/research/itineraries/uab-research/euraxess-uab/uab-ethics-committee-1345703043312.html) and approval was received in June 2021 (Annex III).

4.2. Online questionnaire

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

The questionnaire was divided into two main sections. The first section was dealing with demographics, and the second section was dealing with inclusive and accessible teaching in online courses.

The specific issues examined are available in Annex II.

The questionnaire was designed to take 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 1-4 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

Whilst the same data collection method was used across the partner countries (i.e. on-line questionnaires in the 5 languages of the consortium), there were some variances in quantities. Therefore, scaling is used in the comparative analysis across the different language versions.

The French questionnaire received 24 answers.

The English questionnaire received 16 answers.

The Catalan questionnaire received 9 answers, the Spanish questionnaire received 13 answers and the German questionnaire received 1 answer which was discarded due to lack of relevance. In each case the variance between the results from the different language versions is analysed.

4.2.2. Survey results

The data collected provides a mapping of current challenges in accessibility and inclusion in online educational contexts across different countries. The collected quantitative and qualitative data offers the opportunity for further in-depth analysis of the findings for additional insights. Below the results for each section and question.

- Demographics

The first section of the survey was aimed at gathering demographic information. It consisted of 13 questions which required some basic information related to:

1. age range and gender
2. teaching country and languages
3. field of professional teaching practice and teaching experience
4. educational level
5. teaching formats and practises before and during COVID-19
6. teaching preferences
7. learners average enrolment in online courses.

In the following section a detailed description of the gathered results is presented.

- Age and gender

On average the main age range of the respondents was between 35 - 44 years old (36%) followed by 45-54 years old (28%). Age is closely related to question 6, which is the teaching experience of the participant. In all language versions, participants reporting more than 10 years experience were aged between 35 – 44 years old or between 45-54 years old.

Age range

Legend:
- between 18-24 years old
- between 25-34 years old
- between 35-44 years old
- between 45-54 years old
- between 55-64 years old
- 65 years old and more
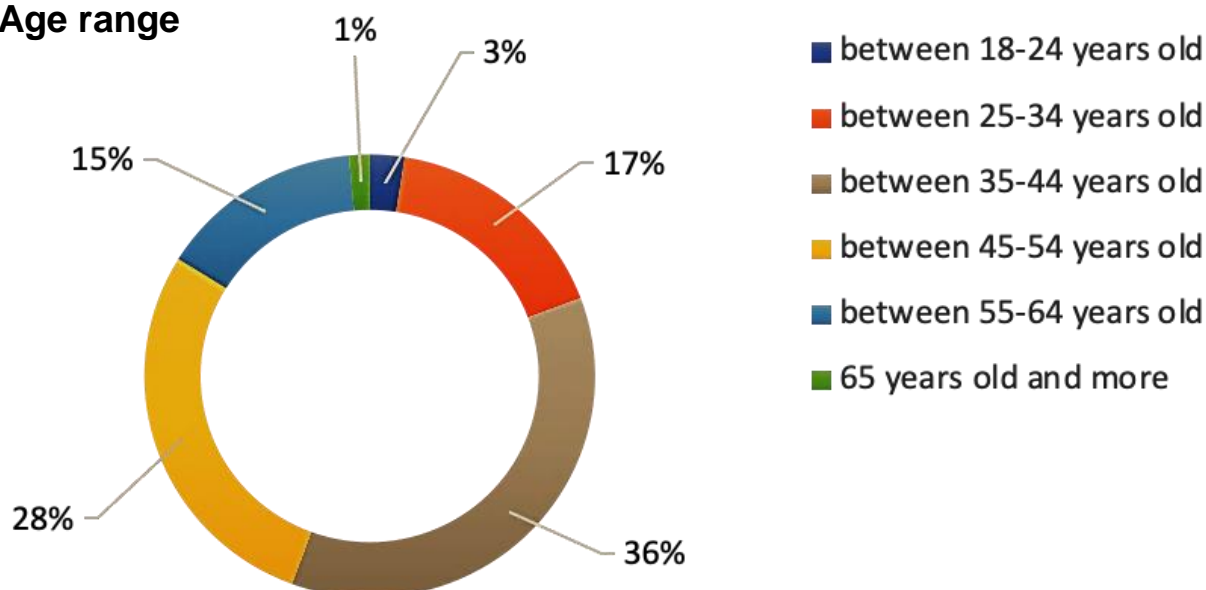
On average the main gender of the respondents was female (69%) and male (31%). While this is the main gender for the Catalan and Spanish versions of the survey with 80%, in the French and English versions gender was more balanced with 52% female and 48% male.

Gender
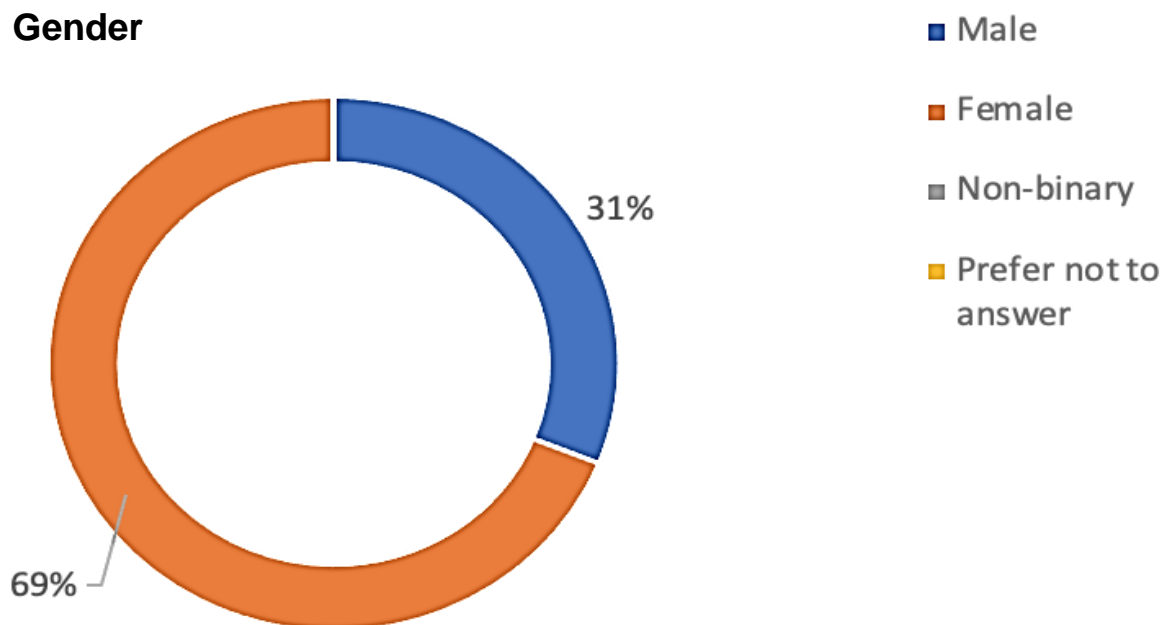
- **Teaching countries and languages**
Answers were received mainly from the following countries: France and Spain, but also from Austria, Belgium, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg and Portugal. Answers were also received from countries outside the EU, such as Canada, Colombia, Japan, Nepal, Saudi Arabia, UK and the United States.

The reported main languages were Catalan, English, French and Spanish. While in the French version 88% of the participants reported to teach mainly in one language (French), in the English, Spanish and Catalan versions most participants reported to teach at least in two languages. The most selected combination was Spanish/Catalan, as both are official languages in Catalonia.

- Field of professional practice and teaching experience

Regarding the field of professional practice of the participants, on average the most selected one was 'Tertiary level/Academic' (58%), followed by 'Continuing vocational education and training in the workplace' (22%).

In third place, it was selected 'Initial vocational education and training at post-secondary level' (14%). Finally, it was selected 'Initial vocational education and training at secondary and upper secondary level' (6%).

A close look at the different language versions shows that in the French version 72% of the participants selected 'Continuing vocational education and training in the workplace', and only 20% selected 'Tertiary level/Academic'.

Field of professional teaching practice
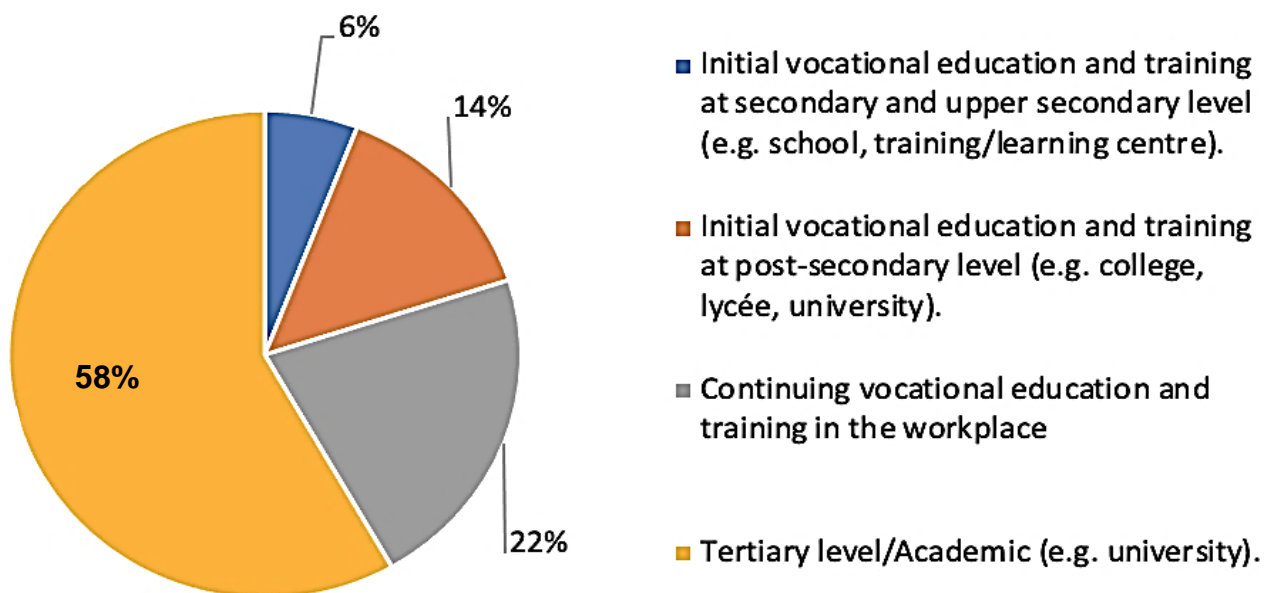
In terms of teaching experience, on average 55% of the participants reported to have more than 10 years experience, followed by 6-10 years experience (15%), 0-2 years experience (16%), and 3-5 years experience with (15%).

- Educational level

In terms of educational background 42% of the participants reported to hold a doctoral degree (PhD), followed by 28% who reported to hold a postgraduate degree (Master). In third place, 20.3% of the participants reported to hold and undergraduate degree (Bachelor), and 8.2% reported to have a post-secondary non-university degree.

A close look at the different language versions shows that while in the Catalan, English and Spanish versions on average 50% of the participants hold a doctoral degree, in the French version 44 % of the participants hold a level 6 diploma (Licence, Master 1) and 32% of the participants hold a level 7 diploma (Master 2).

- Teaching formats before COVID-19 and during COVID-19

Before COVID-19 the teaching practises were mainly conducted face-to-face and to a lesser extent in online asynchronous format. Online synchronous and blended formats were the less selected teaching formats.

Before COVID-19
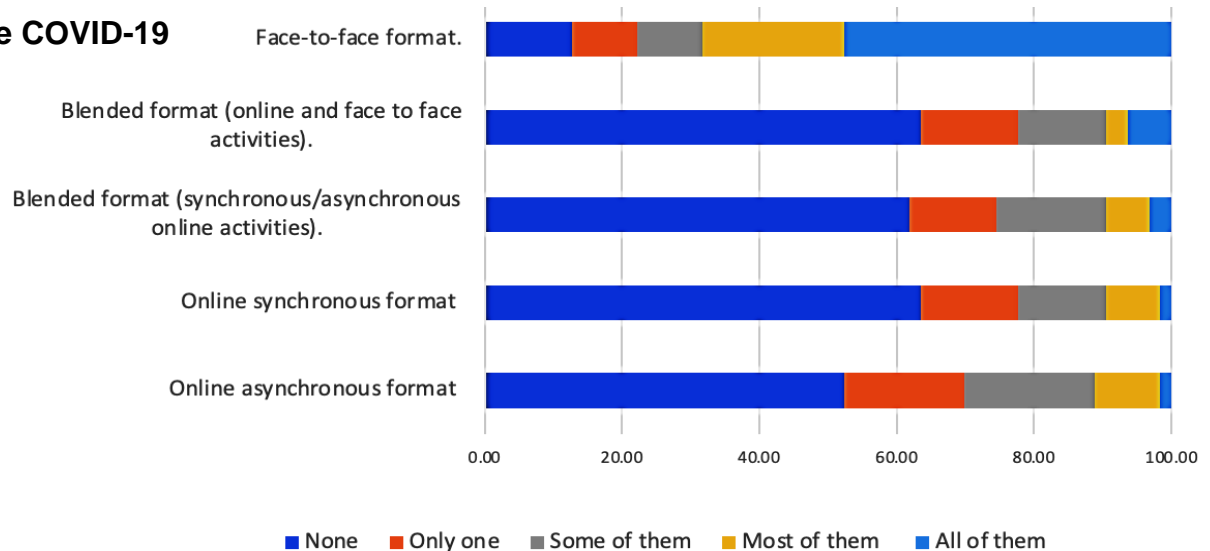
During COVID-19, teaching practices were mainly online synchronous and asynchronous formats. To a lesser extent, blended formats were also present in synchronous/asynchronous activities and online and face to face activities. In all cases, face to face activities during COVID was the less selected option.

During COVID-19
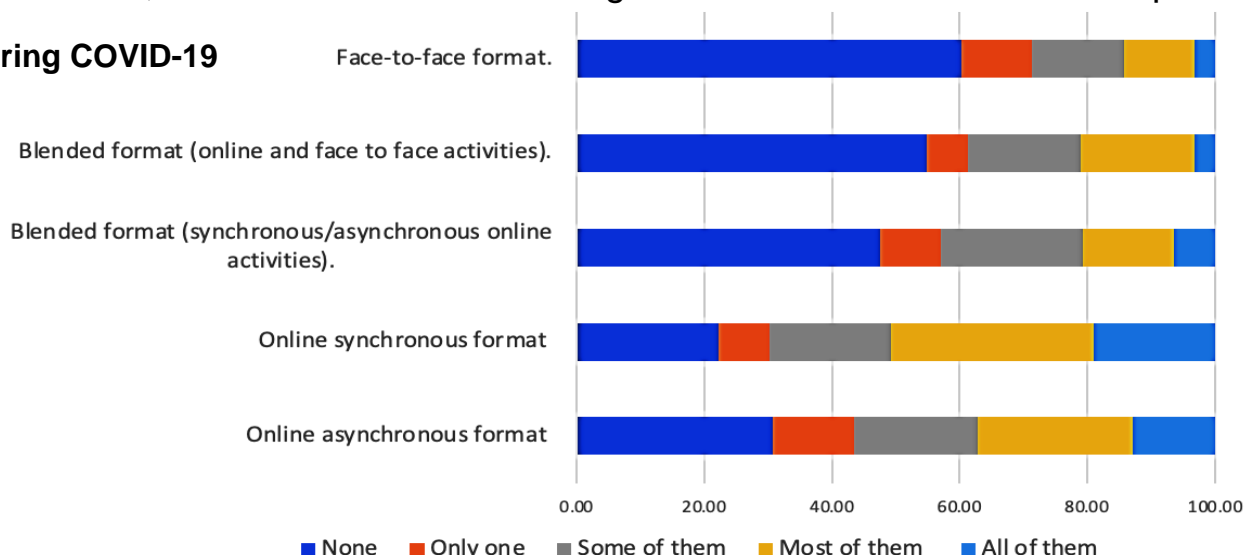
The rapid shift from face to face to online teaching during the COVID-19, had a clear effect on the teaching practices, and professionals in different educational contexts had difficulties to prepare their course materials, conduct their classes and assess the knowledge of the learners.

These difficulties are detailed under the questions related to the problematic aspects of the online platforms/systems.

- Teaching preferences

For this academic year (2021-22) and in the near future, on average the most preferred option with 41% is to return to face to face. Yet, preference for online teaching is present in different formats as follows:

- 29% prefer to choose between face to face and online format.
- 18% prefer a blended format of face to face and online sessions.
- 3% online synchronous.
- 1% online asynchronous.
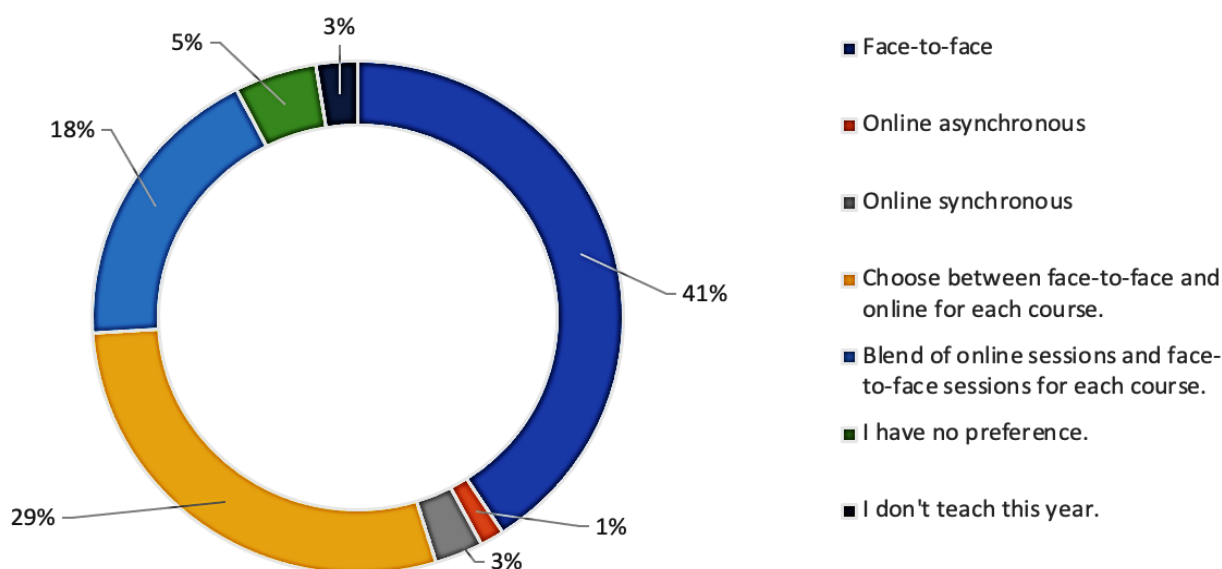
Finally, on average 5% of the participants reported not to have any preference and 3% reported not to teach this academic year (2021-22).

- Average enrolment in online courses

On average 35.7% reported to have between 11-20 learners, followed by 27.8% who reported to have between 26-50 learners, 17.1% reported to have between 21-50 learners, 10% reported to have between 5-10 learners, 5% reported to have more than 11 learners, and 4.5% reported to have between 51-100 learners.

A close look at the different language versions shows that while in English, French and Spanish versions on average participants reported to have between 11-20 learners, in the Catalan version the reported main average (61%) was between 26-50 learners.

- Accessibility and inclusion in online courses

The second section of the survey was related to accessibility and inclusion in online courses. It consisted of 16 questions asking for information about accessible and inclusive teaching and learning practices during COVID-19. The questions were related to:

a) online platforms and systems used to conduct online teaching and associated problematic aspects,

b) implemented practices related to proposed competences in inclusive and accessible teaching,

c) accessibility services,

d) familiarity with the concept and principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL),

e) interest in the proposed competences and certification,

To allow a common understanding of the terms "accessible teaching" and "inclusive teaching", participants were provided with the following definitions before starting this second section:

- "Accessible teaching" means that course materials, learners engagement and assessment are designed and developed so that all learners regardless of their abilities can fully access and participate in online courses. More specifically, it means that learners can perceive, understand, navigate, interact with and contribute to online content and class development.

- "Inclusive teaching" means that all students/learners are entitled to a learning experience that respects diversity of levels, enables participation, removes barriers and anticipates and considers a variety of learning needs and preferences. And above all, prevents from dropping out.

A detailed description of the gathered results is presented next page.

- Online platforms and systems and problematic aspects

The most used platforms and systems were Teams, Moodle and Zoom. Moodle is mostly used to conduct asynchronous online teaching and Zoom mostly used to conduct synchronous online teaching. Teams allows for both synchronous and asynchronous online teaching. Moreover, most teachers used more than one platform to conduct their online teaching during COVID-19.
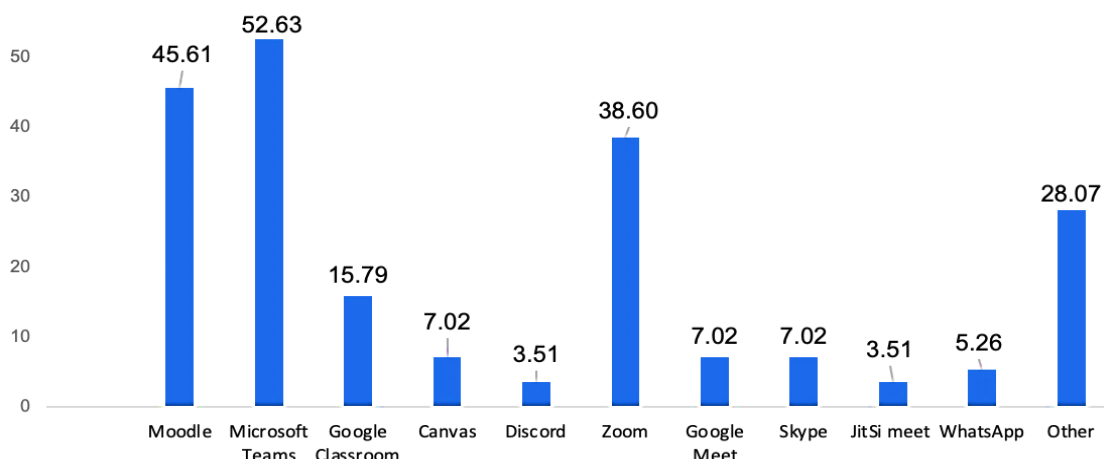
In terms of difficulty and easiness to deal with the teaching platforms, the "difficult" and "very difficult aspects" were first "time constraints to create and prepare materials, then "accommodation measures for learners with disabilities", "accommodation measures for learners whatever their profiles", "learner's support" and "available technical support". "Easy" or "very easy aspects" were first "financial constraints to create and prepare materials", then "pedagogical skills to create and prepare materials", and "digital skills to create and prepare materials".
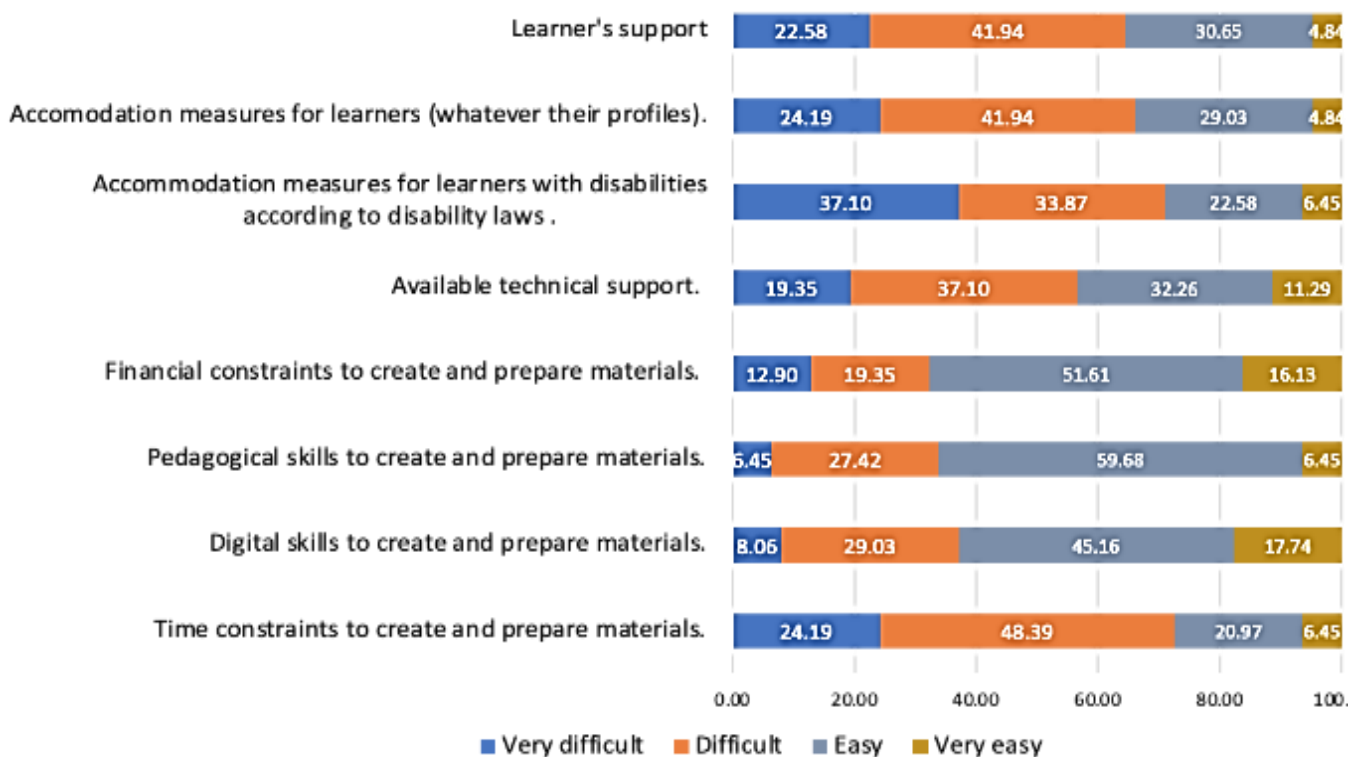
- Competences: Implemented practices and management

On average between 70% and 80% of the participants reported to have implemented the following practices in their teaching: "inclusive classroom", "inclusive course materials", "inclusive lecture strategies", "inclusive assessment", and "accommodations measures".
The only competence that participants reported not to have implemented was "accessible course materials" (see figure below).

Accessible course materials
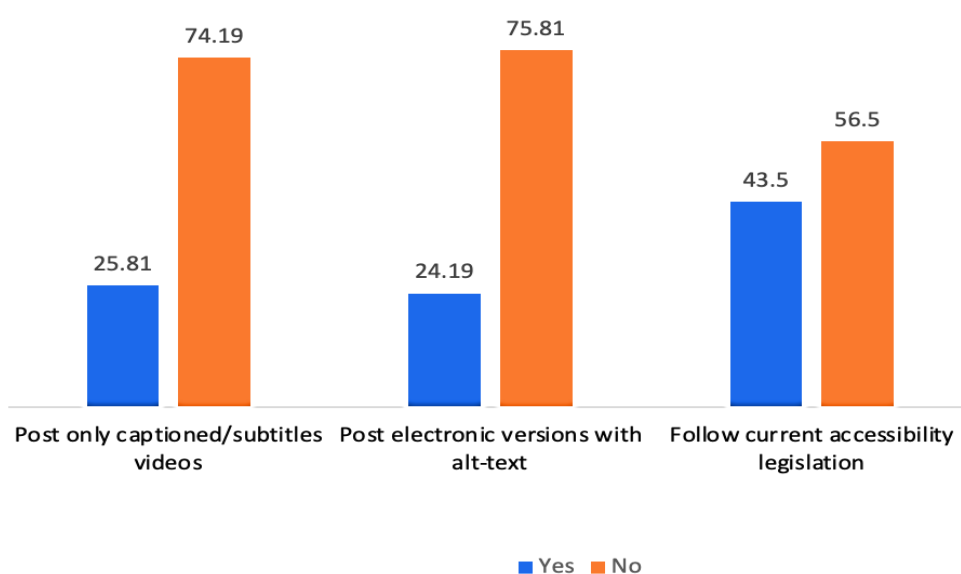
For this competence, on average 75,81% of the participants reported not to post electronic versions with alternative text, 74,19% of the participants reported not to post only captioned/subtitles videos, and 56,5% reported not to follow current accessibility legislation.
This highlights the existing gap and need to inform teaching professionals about the current accessibility legislation, and the existing need to train teachers about existing accessibility services to address the different needs of the learners.

While most teachers confirmed to have applied the detailed practices for each competence, in most cases managing the different competences was reported to be not easy.
In terms of management "accommodation measures", "inclusive lecture strategies", "inclusive assessment" and "accessible course materials" were reported as the most difficult competences to manage (see figure next page).
Therefore, guidance and training for an effective management of the proposed competences is needed.

Manage competences

Chart legend: ■ Not easy at all ■ Not easy ■ Easy ■ Very easy ■ I don't know ■ It depends on the course

Categories (top to bottom): Accomodation measures, Inclusive assessment., Inclusive lecture strategies., Accessible course materials., Inclusive course materials., Inclusive classroom.
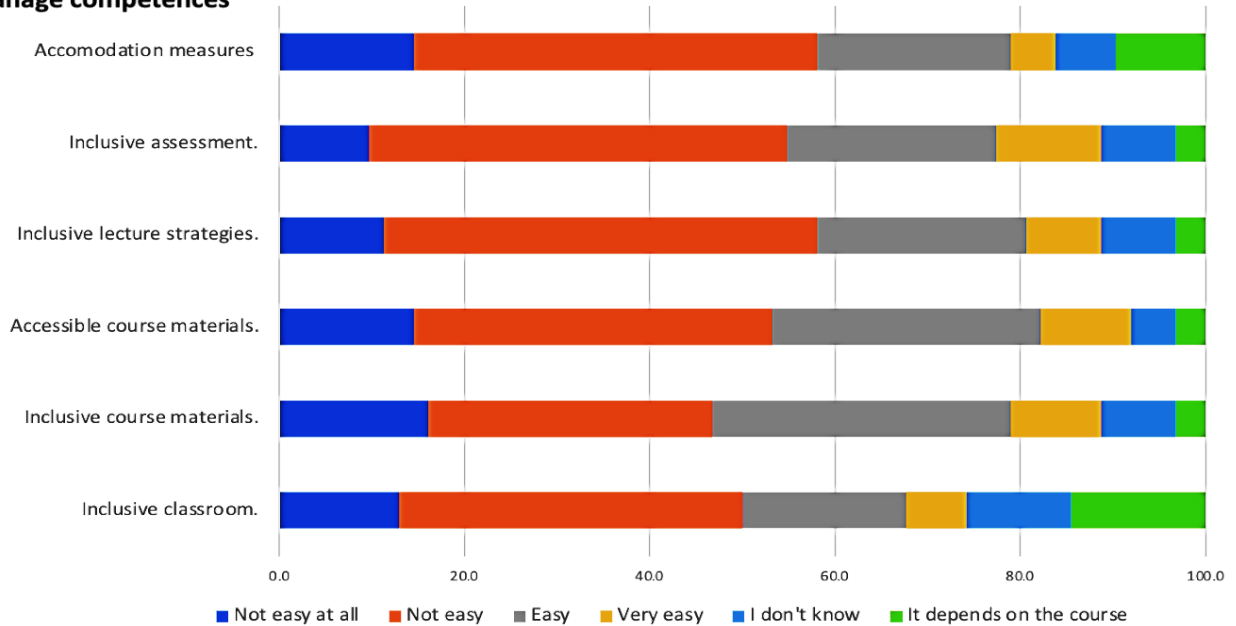
- Accessibility services. As for available accessibility services in online teaching, the most reported services are "easy-to-understand" and "transcriptions". "pre-recorded subtitles", followed by "compatibility with screen readers", "live subtitles", "keyboard compatibility" and "Audio description". "Sign language interpreting" is a service almost never provided (see below).

Accessibility services

Chart legend: ■ Always ■ Often ■ Sometimes ■ Never ■ I don't know

Categories (top to bottom): Keyboard compatibility, Sign Language Interpreting, Easy-to-understand language, Compatibility with screen readers, Transcriptions of audio and video, Audio description, Live subtitles, Pre-recorded subtitles
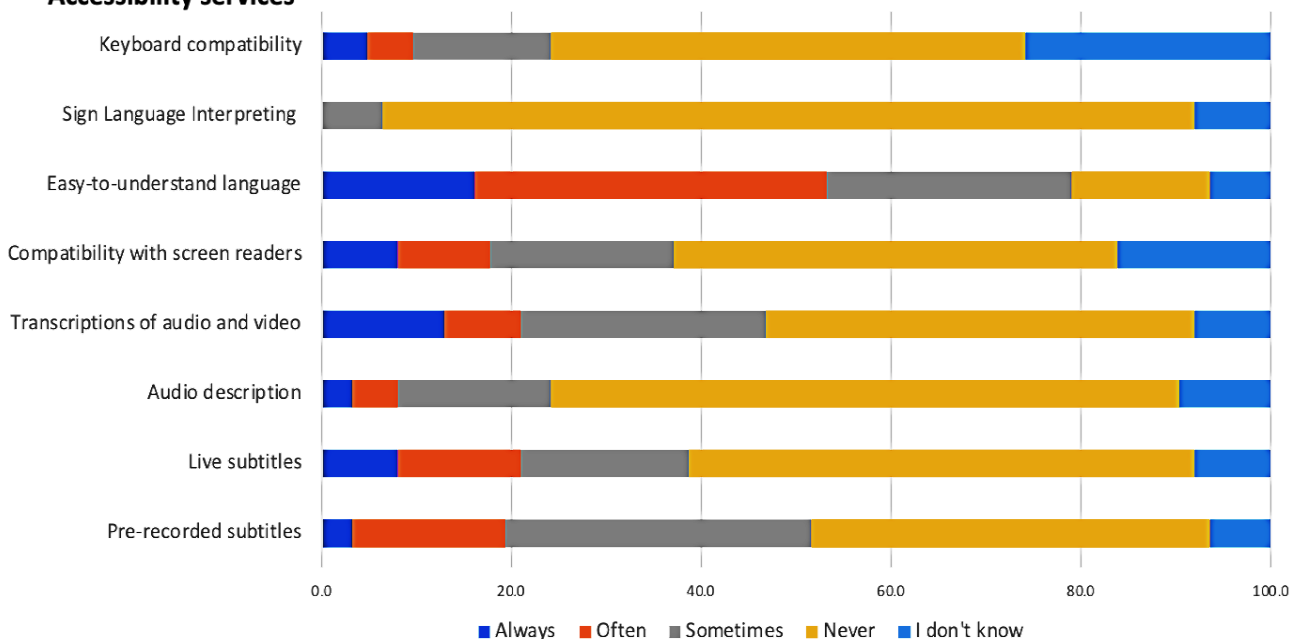
It should be stressed that in the UK and Ireland, it is highly recommended or even mandatory to provide transcriptions to learners and run an "accessibility check" before presenting the digital course materials to learners.

- Familiarity with the concept and principles of Universal Design for Learning

All the participants reported not to be not familiar at all (48%) or not familiar (17%) with the concept of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and the provided definition, extracted from CAST (2020) « Universal Design for Learning »:
UDL is a framework to improve and optimise teaching and learning for all people based on scientific insights into how humans learn.
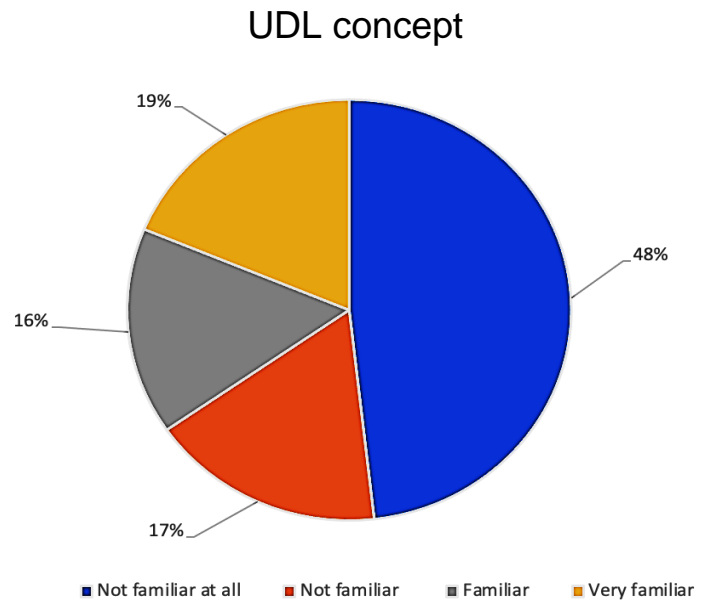
UDL concept

Most importantly it should be highlighted that while most teachers are not familiar with the UDL concept, most of them reported that they often apply the UDL principles in their teaching contexts (see figure below).

UDL principles
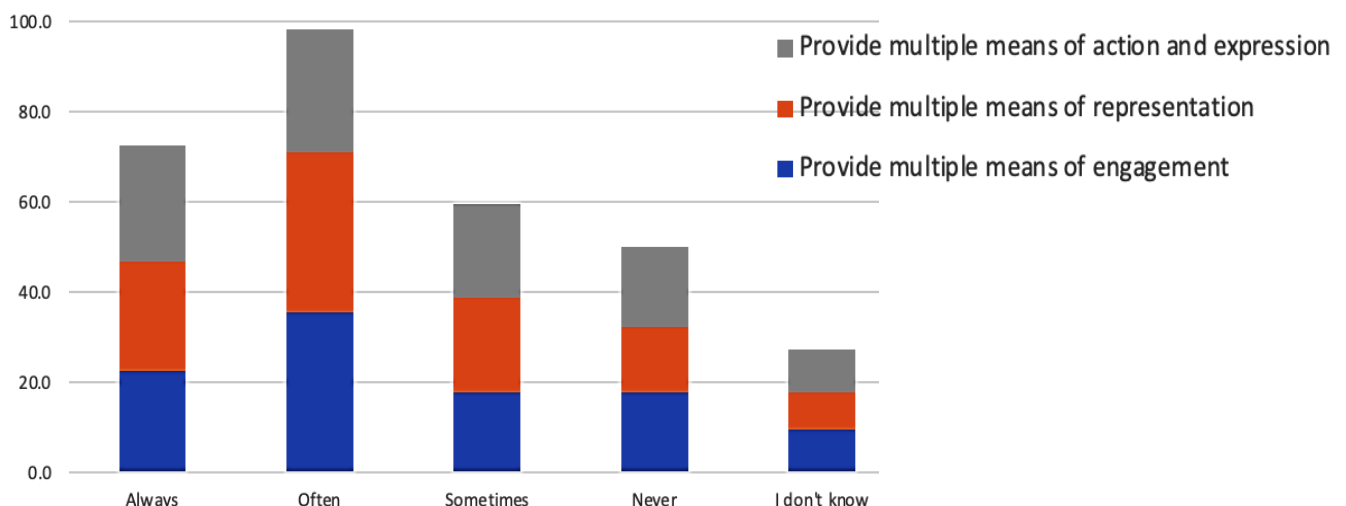
This fact could be due to the fact that UDL is considered a generic theoretical framework that is useful to introduce teaching professionals to the diverse needs of the learners in terms of inclusion and accessibility. Yet, it lacks specific solutions for the implementation in diverse contexts.

- Interest in competences and certification

On average, most participants said that they were very interested or interested in acquiring the 6 proposed competences (see figure below).
In terms of importance, "accommodation measures" and "inclusive lecture strategies" were reported to be the most interesting competences to be acquired. Then, "accessible course materials" and "inclusive course materials", and in third place "inclusive assessment" and "inclusive classroom".

Interest in competences
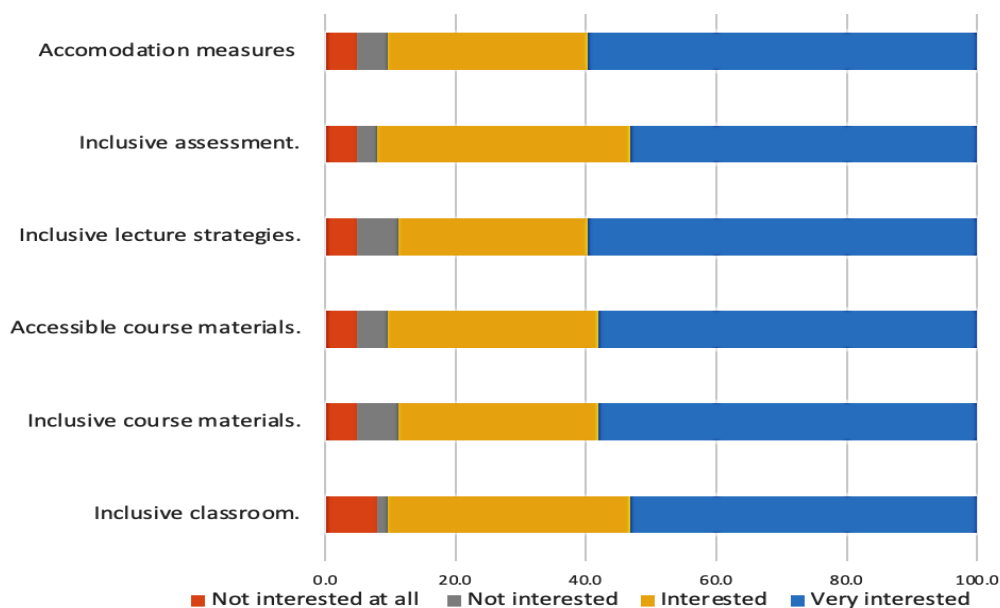
Finally, in terms of interest in an international certification for the new profile " Trainer in accessible and inclusive distance learning", on average 52% reported that they would be interested, 37% reported that they could be interested and only 11% reported not to be interested (see figure below) ;

Interest in the Ide@ certification
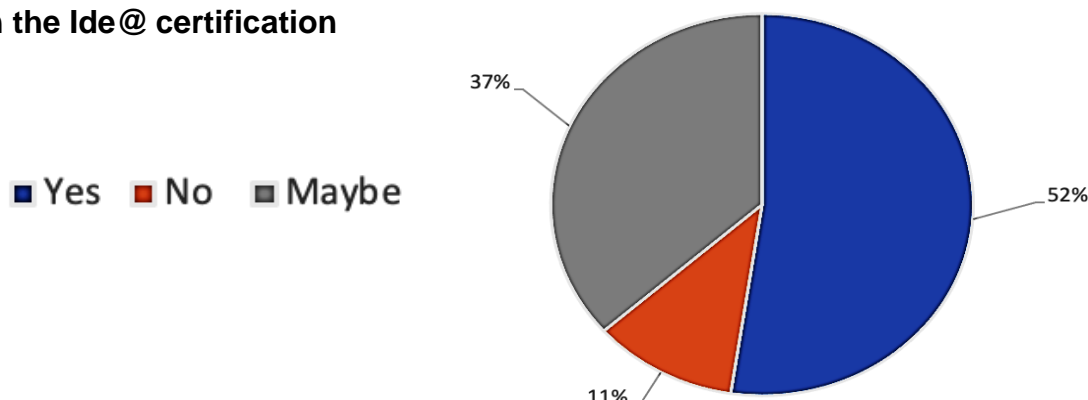
These results could be due to the fact that the survey was launched at an early stage of the IDE@ project. It is expected that interest will increase in the next stages, where a more clear view of the competences, skills and certification will be provided.

4.2.3. Conclusions extracted from the questionnaire

The results from the survey reiterate the need of training in inclusion and accessibility among professional teachers in higher education and vocational training, in particular for online teaching environments.
The findings suggest that the profile of teachers in online educational environments is of highly skilled professionals, with a reported large teaching experience in both educational contexts, namely higher education and vocational educational, and an average enrolment in their courses between 11-20 learners and 26-50 learners.

Regarding teaching formats during COVID-19, the rapid shift from face to face to online teaching formats, had a clear effect on the teaching practices and preferences. Most participants said they would prefer going back to face to face. Yet, preference for online teaching is present in different formats and depending on each course. Fo online teaching, the reported most used platforms and systems were: Microsoft Teams, Moodle and Zoom.

However, most teachers reported to combine more than one platform/system to conduct their online teaching practices during COVID-19. In this regard, teaching professionals mentioned the need to be trained in the specific LMS platforms provided by their institution. In particular, to address the diverse needs of the learners mainly in terms of accessibility, which is closely related to technology.

According to the gathered results, the most difficult aspects to manage in the given platform/system were: "time constraints to create and prepare materials, "accommodation measures for learners with disabilities according to disability laws", "accommodation measures for learners whatever their profiles", "learner's support" and "available technical support".
This fact reinforces the need to provide guidance and training to teaching professionals for the improvement of their digital skills, and effective management of the available accessibility features of the given platforms. These issues were further explored in the focus groups and are reported in the next section.

Most participants reported to have implemented the described practices in their teaching for the competences: "inclusive classroom", "inclusive course materials", "inclusive lecture strategies", "inclusive assessment", and "accommodations measures".
The only competence for which participants reported not to have implemented the detailed practices was "accessible course materials". This issue was further explored in the focus groups and is reported in the next section.

In terms of available accessibility services in online teaching, the most reported accessibility services were "easy-to-understand" and "transcriptions". Sometimes provided accessibility services were first "pre-recorded subtitles", followed by "compatibility with screen readers", "live subtitles", "keyboard compatibility" and "Audio description". Lastly, "sign language interpreting" remains an accessibility service that is only sometimes or never provided, which might be due to the fact that this service is only under request.

In regards to Universal Design for Learning (UDL), it should be stressed that while this is a framework that is being used internationally to address the needs of all learners, participants reported not to be not familiar at all (48%) or not familiar (17%) with UDL.
Yet, they often apply the three main principles in their teaching classes.
This fact could be because UDL is considered a generic theoretical framework that is useful to introduce teaching professionals to the diverse needs of the learners in terms of inclusion and accessibility.
However, it lacks specific solutions for the implementation in diverse teaching contexts, specially in vocational training and higher education, and particularly in online contexts. Therefore, there might be an existing need for easier guidelines for the communication and implementation of UDL practises that are adapted to online environments.

Finally, according to feedback received from participants, 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 among 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

2 focus groups (FG) were carried out online (via Microsoft Teams) on 17 December 2021:
Spanish/Catalan FG (10 am – 11 am) and International FG (12 am – 1 pm)

The French FG was held online (via Zoom) on 5 January 2022, (12 am – 1 pm)

The following documentation was given to participants beforehand in order to enable a more easy to follow meeting: Consent forms and a presentation to be used during the meeting in an accessible format.
The procedure to conduct the focus group was as follows:
- 5 min: Welcome and consent forms
- 10 min: IDE@ project presentation
- 20 min: Proposed competences and open discussion
- 10 min: Accessibility services and open discussion
- 10 min: Job role and open discussion
- 5 min: Final remarks and validation of the extracted conclusions
- 5 min: Farewell, and thanks

According to the procedure, first an introduction about the IDE@ project, partners and objectives was provided.

Second, the following competences were introduced:

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)

Third, a discussion among participants was held around the four questions:

1. Are the proposed competences interesting for the profile " Trainer in accessible and inclusive distance learning "?
2. What aspects should be incorporated in a new training for the profile " Trainer in accessible and iInclusive distance learning "?
3. Which accessibility services should be included in online teaching?
4. What is the added value of being a " Trainer in accessible and inclusive distance learning "?

At the end of the focus group, conclusions for each question were read aloud and validated by all participants.
Finally, signed consent forms were gathered from all participants.

4.3.1. Analysis of teachers feedback - Spanish/Catalan focus group

- Demographic data

The focus group had eight participants (7 females and 1 male).
They all reported to currently work and live in Spain. In terms of work position, they were all teachers with experience in online teaching before and during COVID-19. In terms of educational context, 2 participants reported to teach in vocational training, 4 participants were teachers in university, and 2 participants were teachers in both (vocational training and university).
In terms of experience with learners with disabilities, all participants reported to have experience with learners with disabilities.

- Focus group validated conclusions

After presenting the proposed competences, all participants were invited to answer the question: "Are the proposed competences interesting for the certified profile " Trainer in accessible and inclusive Distance Learning?".
All participants agreed that the proposed competences are relevant for the certification, and are needed for the proposed professional profile.
One participant mentioned that this certification could be for 2 different profiles, namely:

- teaching professionals could improve their knowledge about inclusion and accessibility,
- non-teaching professionals in educational contexts could provide support to all teachers in terms of diversity and inclusion.

Several participants reported that in terms of accessibility they only receive a communication from the institution informing that a learner has a disability, with no specifications and/or instructions about the needs of the learner.
One participant mentioned "I understand the diversity, but I do not know it. I need to know where to find specific information to cover the needs of the learner."
In addition, several participants reported the need to run an initial diagnosis at a group level in terms of diversity and accessibility needs. This would allow to identify, prioritise, and cover the different inclusion and accessibility needs at both, group and personal level.

After this first discussion about the competences a second question was raised to participants: "What aspects should be incorporated in a new training for the certified profile " Trainer in accessible and inclusive Distance Learning?". The discussion was structured around each competence and results are presented below.

For competence 1 "Understand diversity in online teaching", all participants mentioned that this competence should be focused on understanding the needs and contexts of the learners, and not on applying inclusive and accessible practises.

Participants also stressed the need to inform all learners about diversity in order to improve the inclusion of **all** learners.

Finally, one participant stressed the need to better understand the needs of the group in general, and the specific needs of each learner.

To this aim, under the category "inclusive classroom" it would be good to introduce a guide on how to effectively plan a "mentorship space" to effectively strengthen the "teacher-learner" relation.

For competence 2 "Plan and evaluate accessibility in online teaching", all participants mentioned the need to differentiate between individual accommodation measures more related to technical issues, and accommodation measures related to curricula.

Several participants mentioned that the only information that they receive is the level of disability, which in Spain can range from 33% to 100%, but no information is provided about the specific disability.

This fact can be very problematic for non-visible disabilities more related to cognitive problems. Sensory disabilities are more visual and user organisations such as ONCE (Spain), provide assistance for these types of learners.

In the case of non visible or non-documented disabilities, such as dyslexia or anxiety disorders, no information is provided and no guidance is given. Therefore, both types of disabilities should be considered.

In addition, it was mentioned that including relevant information in terms of specific accessibility legislation would be very beneficial in order to inform teaching professionals about the legislative framework.

For competence 3 "Design and create accessible course materials in online teaching", all participants agreed on the need to provide a guide/tool kit to be implemented in line with the legislation framework to be introduced in competence 1.

Several participants mentioned the need to provide different use cases that could be used as the basis of designing and creating accessible course materials.

For competence 4 "Manage diversity in online teaching", all participants agreed on the need to allow learners to express themselves in different forms.

Under "inclusive assessment" some participants mentioned the need to personalise instead of providing flexibility with the deadlines and delivery formats of the assignments.

The reason behind this is because learners with disabilities, such as Asperger, are more comfortable when specific instructions are provided. Moreover, there is a need to establish a close link with the specific service dealing with learners with disabilities, to ensure that teachers receive proper information and guidance about the specific needs of the learners, and possible solutions to improve inclusion and accessibility.

After this second question, a list of the different accessibility services was provided and participants were requested to discuss "which accessibility services should be included in online teaching?"

In the first instance participants mentioned the need to differentiate between synchronous and asynchronous teaching, as the accessibility services for each format are different.

One participant mentioned that in some cases adding too many accessibility services might be counterproductive. Ideally accessibility services should be personalised according to the learners needs.

Finally, it was also mentioned that accessibility services should not only be considered for the class development and materials, but also when providing feedback to the learners (i.e. providing feedback through a podcast).

The last question to participants was related to the job profile and certification. To this aim, participants were asked " What is the added value of being a « Trainer in accessible and inclusive distance learning »?

All participants mentioned that a certification would add value to a work that in most cases is done on a voluntary basis. They also agreed on the need and interest in the proposed certification.

Finally, participants stressed that all institutions should have certified « Trainers in accessible and inclusive distance learning » to ensure the quality of the teaching materials.

4.3.2. Analysis of teachers feedback - International focus group

- Demographic data

The focus group had six participants (4 females and 2 males). They all reported to currently work in the following countries: 1 Ireland, 1 Italy, 1 Qatar, 2 Spain and 1 UK. In terms of work position, they were all teachers with experience in online teaching before and during COVID-19.
In terms of educational context, 2 participants reported to teach in vocational training and 4 participants were teachers in university.
In terms of experience with learners with disabilities, all participants reported to have experience with learners with disabilities and one participant reported to have a disability.

- Focus group validated conclusions

After presenting the proposed competences, all participants were invited to answer the question: "Are the proposed competences interesting for the certified profile " Trainer in accessible and inclusive Distance Learning? ".

All participants agree that the proposed competences are relevant for the certification and needed for the professional profile. Several participants reported that due to COVID-19, in last year, there has been a recruitment of technologists at an organisation level to help teachers to create materials for online teaching, but there is no help to put all class materials together.

This comment is inline with the results gathered from the online survey, in which it is stressed that technical support remains a major challenge for online teaching, and teachers do not have the proper skills to implement accessibility.

According to participants, accessibility should be a further step to be included in the training for online teaching, and there is an existing need to inform teachers that adding accessibility improves the overall quality of the teaching and learning materials, as it is essential for some and beneficial for all learners.

Participants also mentioned that some cognitive disabilities are not visible. Therefore, it is important to cover not only sensory disabilities (which are mostly visible), but also cognitive ones which are less visible, and sometimes not reported. During the COVID-19 cognitive disabilities are increasing.
In addition, in online classes there is no eye-contact with students and it is difficult to understand the problem in terms of accessibility and/or inclusion.

Under the competence "Understand diversity in online teaching", it was highlighted the need to provide guidance on how to provide inclusive teaching in terms of inclusive language.

Under the competence "Plan and evaluate accessibility in online teaching" it was highlighted the need to provide guidance for teachers to understand how to activate the accessibility features of the corresponding platform/system.

After this first discussion about the competences a second question was raised to participants: "What aspects should be incorporated in a new training for a certified profile " Trainer in accessible and inclusive distance learning? ". The discussion was structured around each competence and results are presented below.

Competence 1: Understand diversity in online teaching. Several participants stressed the need to include "inclusive teaching" as part of this competence. It would force the teaching professional to prepare the classes in advance and to consider different or several cultural backgrounds of the learners. One participant raised a terminological issue regarding the term "inclusion", other proposed terms were "universal", "usable", "for all".

Competence 2: Plan and evaluate accessibility in online teaching. Several participants stressed that "accessibility measures" should be provided for all learners, not only for those with "reported/documented disabilities", as some disabilities are not visible, and a lot of students do not know their needs. Participants from the UK, Ireland and Italy reported that in their institutions teachers have to provide the materials ahead to learners. This helps learners to easily follow the class.
Also in distance learning recordings of the sessions are very important. Some learners may not have a proper internet connection.
Therefore, having the recordings ensures that all learners receive the same information.

Competence 3: Design and create accessible course materials in online teaching. Several participants stressed that most teachers do not know how to make materials accessible, and that guidance to know the accessibility features of the given platform/system is really needed.
The participant from the UK reported that in their institution the course materials are uploaded in a platform which checks accessibility and provides a traffic light (green, orange, red). The use of this traffic light is a good solution to ensure that "Accessible course materials" are provided.

Competence 4: Manage diversity in online teaching. Some participants reported that in their institutions they have internal and external assessments to ensure that materials consider inclusion and accessibility.

One participant raised the issue that there are teachers working only for a few hours. This fact complicates that diversity and accessibility is provided homogeneously across all courses.

After this second question, a list of the different accessibility services was provided and participants were requested to discuss "Which accessibility services should be included in online teaching?".

All participants agreed that providing transcripts of the class materials is an accessibility measure very much appreciated by all students. In some institutions this is a mandatory practice.

In addition, due to new accessibility legislation, accessibility services in education will become mandatory in the next few years.

Finally, the use of different tools such as automatic speech recognition systems, can be used as a starting point to provide transcripts and/or subtitles/captions.

The last question to participants was related to the job profile and certification. To this aim, participants were asked "What is the added value of being certified " Trainer in accessible and inclusive distance learning? ".

All participants agreed on the need and interest in the proposed certification.

One participant from Spain stressed that there are several initiatives at European level to train teachers in digital culture, and that this certification could be considered as part of such a training.

4.3.3. Analysis of teachers feedback - French focus group

- Demographic data

The focus group had nine participants (7 females and 2 males). They reported to currently work in the following countries: 1 Estonia, 1 Canada, 2 Egypt, 1 Reunion Island, and 5 France. In terms of work position, they were all teachers with experience in online teaching before and/or during COVID-19. In terms of educational context, 2 participants reported to teach at the university and 7 participants were teachers in vocational training. In terms of experience with learners with disabilities, eight participants reported to have experience with learners with disabilities, and one participant reported not to have any experience. Three participants reported to have a disability.

- Focus group validated conclusions

After presenting the proposed competences, all participants were invited to answer the question: "Are the proposed competences interesting for the a certified profile " Trainer in accessible and inclusive distance learning? ".

All participants agreed that the proposed competences were relevant for the certification and needed for the professional profile. Some participants highlighted that the most important aspect is that learners have access to the platform and contents, regardless of their disability, and/or if it is officially recognised.
Several participants reported that competence 1 "Understand diversity in online teaching" and competence 4 "Manage diversity in online teaching" were closely related, and that they could be merged.
One participant stressed that competence 1 should include basic concepts related to people with disabilities, accessibility, inclusion, adaptation.
One participant expressed concerns regarding competence 2 "Plan and evaluate accessibility in online teaching", as in some institutions to plan accessibility is a task assigned to the institution, not to the teacher.
On the other side, the same participant considered that the teacher could be trained to evaluate the accessibility of the given platforms/systems.
Finally, several participants considered competence 3 "Design and create accessible course materials in online teaching" a core competence.

After this first discussion about the competences a second question was raised to participants: "What aspects should be incorporated in a new training for a certified profile " Trainer in accessible and inclusive distance learning? ". The discussion was structured around each competence and results are presented below.

Competence 1: Understand diversity in online teaching. Several participants agreed that when talking about inclusion, one does not necessarily realise the difficulties faced by learners, and some learners do not express their needs.

Competence 2: Plan and evaluate accessibility in online teaching. Several participants stressed that "accessibility measures" should be provided for all learners, not only for those with "reported/documented disabilities", as some disabilities are not visible, and a lot of students do not know their needs. Some participants stressed that when talking about online teaching, a distinction should be made between synchronous and asynchronous learning, as teaching modes and rhythm paths are different for each type of online teaching.

Competence 3: Design and create accessible course materials in online teaching. All participants agreed that this is a core competence, and that during the COVID-19 most organisations did not provide enough training to teachers on how to use the given platforms to deliver online teaching. Some participants stressed the need to be trained with the accessibility features that each online platform/system offers.

Competence 4: Manage diversity in online teaching. One participant stressed the need to always adapt the assessments for people with disabilities. This participant had to prepare an assessment for the DELF (Diplôme d'études en langue française, Diploma in French Language Studies) for a learner who was blind. There was no version of the exam in Braille. Thus, a part of the written exam was taken out.
Therefore, it is important to have a flexible design to assess people with diverse needs.

After this second question, a list of the different accessibility services was provided and participants were requested to discuss "Which accessibility services should be included in online teaching?".

All participants agreed that providing different types of accessibility services according to the learners needs is very relevant. Participants reported that accessibility services, such as subtitles or transcriptions of the oral text are essential for some, but beneficial for all, as subtitles and transcriptions reduce language barriers a lot.
On the other hand, one participant reported that providing these services is very time consuming, and in most cases there is no time to properly provide subtitles and transcriptions for all content.

Other reported accessibility services were keyboard accessibility and applying style sheets when preparing digital documents, particularly, to address the needs of people who is blind or with sight loss.
This accessibility service also helps people with cognitive disabilities.

Finally, a specific mention was made to the use of sans serif fonts, such as Luciole, to address the need of people with dyslexia, and is in line with Easy-to-Read and Plain Language guidelines.

The last question to participants was related to the job profile and certification. To this aim, participants were asked "What is the added value of being a " Trainer in accessible and inclusive distance learning ?".

All participants agreed on the need and interest in the proposed certification. Several participants agreed that a teacher with this certification could be designated as a contact point within a teaching organisation, to help teaching professionals to address any problematic issues related to inclusion and accessibility in online teaching.

Even if in France the presence of a disability point of contact is normally compulsory, the needs of the learners are not always properly detected or addressed. An additional added value would be that teaching professionals would learn more about the disabilities and apply inclusive and accessible teaching techniques and practises.

One participant mentioned that in Québec, there are help centres for learners with disabilities. Usually, teaching professionals redirect the burden of accessibility services to these centres. The certified person could help to avoid the disassociation of the accessibility needs of the learners, and provide a more efficient approach in terms of inclusion and accessibility.

4.3.4 Conclusions extracted from the focus groups

The focus groups allowed to extract a deep insight regarding the current needs and challenges in online teaching in terms of inclusion and accessibility from a teachers perspective.
Due to COVID-19 there has been a recruitment of technologists at an organisation level to help teaching professionals to create materials for online teaching, but there is no specific help to put all class materials together.
This fact is online with the results gathered from the online survey, as it was reported that available technical support remains a major challenge for online teaching. Thus, teachers do not have the proper skills to implement accessibility features.

In some cases teachers only receive a communication from the institution informing that a learner has a disability, with no specific information and/or instructions about the learners' needs. In addition, not all disabilities are visible. In fact, some cognitive disabilities are not visible.
Therefore, efforts in the IDE@ project should not only cover sensory disabilities (that are mostly reported and visible), but also cognitive ones, less visible and in most cases, not documented and difficult to address.
According to the survey conducted by Active Minds in April 2020 (https://www.activeminds.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Student-Survey-Infographic.pdf) with 2086 college students about the impact of COVID-19 in their mental health, 80% of students reported that COVID-19 had negatively impacted their mental health, and stress or anxiety are considered one of the major problems.
Recommendations from this study to address student mental health during and after the pandemic include the focus on soft skills, such as empathy, compassion, communication, understanding, and validation for the burdens students are experiencing.
This recommendation is on-line with the comments provided by the focus groups to teachers. Measures such as running an initial diagnosis on a group level to see diversity and accessibility needs, would allow to identify, prioritise and cover different needs at group and personal level from an initial stage.

Regarding the competences, all participants agreed that the proposed competences are relevant for the certification, and needed for the professional profile. Therefore, it can be asserted that the four main competences have been validated from a teachers' perspective. Yet, a close look at the comments provided on the competences, shows that new aspects need to be considered and included when creating the specific skills and learning outcomes of the unified guides for the new certified professional profile " Trainer in accessible and inclusive distance learning ".

An explanation of the different aspects to be considered for each of the proposed competences is provided below:

Competence 1: "Understand diversity in online teaching", should focus on understanding key concepts related to diversity such as accessibility, diversity, inclusion and Universal Design to better know the needs of all learners. In addition, inclusive teaching in terms of inclusive language could also be included as part of this competence.
To this aim, the creation of "context cards" with testimonials from learners with visible and non visible disabilities who describe their needs, could prove to be useful to help teaching professionals to better understand the needs of all learners.

Competence 2: "Plan and evaluate accessibility in online teaching", should provide guidance to teachers to address the needs of all learners in terms of accessibility, not only for those with "reported/documented disabilities" or those with visual disabilities. In this regard, information regarding current accessibility legislation should be included.
Moreover, the creation of a repository with recommendations, tools and best practises in terms of accessibility should be provided.

Competence 3: "Design and create accessible online course materials", should be a tool/kit to start with accessibility, with guidance for teachers on how to activate the different available accessibility features for online teaching. Moreover, benefits of the different accessibility services to address the diverse learners needs could be included.

Competence 4: "Manage diversity in online teaching", should focus on guidance to promote that learners can express themselves in different forms. Recommendations for the creation of a specific "mentorship space" to allow each learner to express their needs, could prove to be effective and would strengthen the "teachers-learners"relation. In this competence a communication guide or protocol with the relevant stakeholders involved in the accessibility and inclusion chain should be provided. In addition, participants also stressed the need to adapt the rhythm of the online class development according to the format synchronous or asynchronous.

Finally, according to the feedback received, this certification could be for two different profiles, namely teaching and non-teaching professionals in educational contexts. On one side, teaching professionals could improve their knowledge about inclusion and accessibility. On the other side, non-teaching professionals in educational contexts could provide support to all teachers in terms of diversity and inclusion.

5. Results

Today, regulation regarding accessibility and inclusive teaching practises can be found in all European countries, as there is a legislative framework in place. This is also the case in most non-European countries, such as Canada, UK and US. Still, the provision and maturity level of accessibility services and inclusive teaching practises in the different educational institutions is very fragmented. In some countries such as Ireland, UK and US providing a transcript to learners is highly recommended, and in some institutions even mandatory.

This is not the case in other countries, such as France, Spain or Italy. Therefore, a lack of common ground and a need to share best practices in online accessible and inclusive teaching and learning can be identified across the different EU member states.

The findings discussed in this report contribute to the IDE@ project's global objective of establishing the professional profile and competences for a certified « 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 teaching professionals 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 of a certified « Trainer in accessible and inclusive distance learning ».

Furthermore, the results confirm the need and clear interest in the proposed certification. In short, there is a market for the training being developed as part of subsequent stages of the IDE@ project.

6. Next steps

The findings discussed in this report contribute to the IDE@ project's global objective of establishing the professional profile for a certified « Trainer in accessible and inclusive distance learning ».

7. Dissemination

The work conducted in this IO 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. List of competences of the « Comptence framework for a trainer in accessible and inclusive distance learning »

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

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 groups :
Estella Oncins, researcher and lecturer at UAB
Maria Machuca, researcher and lecturer at UAB
Mail address: estella.oncins@uab.cat

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

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

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 UAB 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 UAB.

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 rights under the European General Data Protection Regulation by making a request to the email address:
proteccio.dades@uab.cat enclosing a photocopy of your ID document. Request forms for this purpose are available on the website of the UAB Data Protection Office (https://www.uab.cat/web/coneix-la-uab/itineraris/proteccio-de-dades/dretsde-les-personesinteressades-1345764799916.html). You may also file a claim before the Catalan Data Protection Authority (https://apdcat.gencat.cat/ca/contacte), or contact the UAB data protection officer (proteccio.dades@uab.cat)

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 groups, you can contact estella.oncins@uab.cat 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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