SIMPL4ALL
Promoting inclusive learning

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

MAKE LEARNING SIMPLE FOR ALL

Simplified language instruction manual

Contents

1. Introduction

In Chapter 1, we write about what SIMPL4ALL is:
- SIMPL4ALL is a project.
- SIMPL4ALL is an inclusive approach.
- SIMPL4all is also a tool for making information easy to understand.

The main **aim** of the international project **Tools for an Inclusive Learning Mediation: Promoting inclusive learning (Simpl4ALL)** is to develop a baseline and methodology for a simplified language version.

We could consider SIMPL4ALL language version as an intermediate level of difficulty between Plain Language and Easy Language.
You can read about the two concepts we mention here in chapters 2. Methodology and 7. Terminology and Glossary.

The SIMPL4ALL Language is intended **for all people.** SIMPLE FOR ALL.
It is a highly inclusive approach to making information accessible to all people. In SIMPL4ALL Language, all the materials we use for information can be made easier.
We hope the SIMPL4ALL tools will help make communication, education, and understanding of the individual and society better.

In the project, co-financed by European Union,
organisations from **six countries** work together:

- From Italy: ENAIP FVG (they are the coordinator), FONDAZIONE PROGETTOAUTISMO FVG and CUORE MENTE LAB.
- From Slovenia: Zavod RISA.
- From Austria: LHSD Gmbh.
- From France: LES APPRIMEURS.
- From Belgium: SCS LogoPsyCom.
- From Spain: ITE Network.

Organisations that worked to prepare this Handbook have rich experience. We used this experience to develop the Handbook to be as inclusive as possible and consider as many different learners as possible. We developed guidelines, rules that can, to some extent, be the same for all people. But keep in mind that rules often must be changed, adapted to accommodate the learners' needs.

This handbook can be used by professionals who work with people with disabilities over the age of 15. The methodological guide is aimed primarily at trainers, teachers and educators who work with people with different learning styles that can sometimes be connected to disabilities.

The **target groups** are:

- all learners but especially young people with additional learning needs (here, we avoid using wording such as young people with different diagnosis as diagnostic labels can lead to stigma and other negative consequences, but it relates to youth with autism, specific learning disorders, mild and moderate intellectual disabilities and other) or sensory impairments and
- teachers, trainers, relatives, peers (in cooperative learning, peer collaboration).

Not all people have the same needs. Groups of people or individuals benefit from different adaptations.
That is why the **guidelines must be flexible.**

2. **Methodology**

In Chapter 2, we describe what is important to know if we want to support learners in the right way.
We want to support people by providing information that is easy to understand and learn by learners with different styles.
Chapter 2 will also help you understand why and how we developed the SIMPL4ALL Language Guidelines.

2.1. Learning for all

The purpose of education in the 21st century is not simply the mastery of content or the use of new technologies; it is the mastery of the learning process and the adaptation of curricula to individual differences. Education should help transform novice learners into expert learners. Expert learners are individuals who want to learn, who know how to learn strategically and who are aware of their own learning style. With this, they are prepared for lifelong learning.

2.1.1. Universal Design for Learning

In project SIMPL4ALL, we use Universal Design for Learning (UDL).

With this, we wish to provide educators with a framework to create curricula that meet the needs of all learners. We pay special attention to simplification of language.

The Centre for Applied Special Technology (CAST) defines UDL as a set of ever-evolving principles, guidelines and checkpoints for the design and development of curricula. Such curricula offer all individuals equal opportunities to learn.

They present a model for the creation of learning objectives, methods, materials, and assessments that are valid for all. This concept is not one-size-fits-all but presents flexible approaches that can be customised and adapted to the individual needs of each learner.

The development of UDL began at CAST in Boston. This was thirty years ago. The aim was to develop pathways to help students with disabilities access the general education curriculum.
In the early years, the focus was on assisting students to adapt to or overcome their disabilities in such way that they could follow the general education curriculum.

This work was based on the use of assistive technology, compensatory tools (such as spell-checkers) and software for skill development. These tools remain an important aspect of any educational plan to this day.

However, over time this approach proved to be limited. It did not consider the fundamental role of the environment in determining who is or is not considered a "disabled" person. The view was one of integration but not inclusion within a biopsychosocial model as outlined by the International Classification of Functioning (ICF).

To shift the burden to real and not just nominal inclusion, the burden of adaptation should have fallen on the curriculum and not on the learner! Many learners have difficulties reading and understanding texts, for example, but since many texts cannot adapt to individual variability, to us, it is not the learners who are "disabled", but the texts themselves. This means that we need to **adapt the texts and find new ways, not change the learners!**

2.1.2. Universal Design for Learning and Neurodiversity

In human beings, and specifically in study environments, individual variability is the norm, not the exception. When we write a text, for example, to meet the needs of an imaginary ‘’average reader’’, we do not consider the real variability of the readers. There are all kind of readers! Because of that, the school system fails to provide equal learning opportunities. It excludes students with different abilities, backgrounds and motivations who do not meet the imaginary norm of the “average”.

A useful concept to overcome the idea of average is that of **neurodiversity**. Neurodiversity falls under broader concept of biodiversity and indicates the natural neurological variability which is present throughout the human species.

UDL from a neurodiversity perspective should therefore aim to make comprehension (text comprehension, for example) as accessible as possible to all learners, diagnosed and undiagnosed. Accessibility is reached by providing each reader with a variety of different ways and formats to learn from.

Such approach should make a difference in two ways:

- Normalising the fact that we all learn in different ways.
- Making comprehension (text comprehension, for example) and education more accessible to all types of minds.

2.1.3. The principles of Universal Design for Learning

UDL helps to accommodate student variability by suggesting flexibility in objectives, methods, materials and assessments. This allows educators to meet diverse needs of the learners.

Using UDL from the start we can create a curriculum that meets the needs of all learners. With this, we do not have to make post-hoc changes and we save on costs and time.

With its structure UDL encourages creation of flexible designs from the start, with customisable options, to allow learners to make progress from where they are to where they would like to be.

There are many options for achieving this and they can provide effective instruction for all learners.

UDL has three fundamental principles, based on neuroscientific research. These principles provide the basis for its guidelines:

- **Principle I: Providing multiple means of representation (the WHAT of learning)**

All people do not learn in the same way. Learners are different in the way they perceive and understand the information that is presented to them. For example, people with sensory disabilities (like blindness or deafness), specific learning disorders, non-dominant language, or culture and other may all require different ways of approaching the content. Some learners may simply grasp information more quickly and effectively if they learn with help of visual or auditory means instead of written text.

Learning and transfer of learning happen when **multiple representations** are used. Different representations allow learners to make connections within the text, as well as between different concepts. In short, there is no single mode of representation that is optimal for all learners!

It is crucial that we provide **different representations** for all kind of learners.

- **Principle II: Providing multiple means of action and expression (the HOW of learning)**

Learners are different in the way they can make their way in a learning environment and express what they know. This means that learners also have different approaches to learning.

These learning approaches can be connected to, for example: motor disabilities (like cerebral palsy), difficulties with strategic and organisational skills (like executive function disorders, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder), language difficulties and other.
Some people may be able to express themselves well in writing but not in speaking, and vice versa. Action and expression require a great deal of strategy, practice, and organisation. This is another thing in which learners can differ. In fact, there is no single means of action or expression that can be optimal for all learners.
It is crucial that we provide **different options for action and expression.**

- **Principle III: Providing multiple means of engagement (the WHY of learning)**

Affectivity (this is human response or ability to experience affects connected to emotion) is a crucial element of learning.
Learners are very different when it comes to engagement and motivation to learn. There are many reasons that can influence individual variation in affectivity, for example neurodevelopmental (autism) or cultural factors, personal interest, subjectivity, and prior knowledge.
Some learners are highly involved through spontaneity and novelty.
Other learners remain uninvolved or are even frightened by these aspects and prefer routine.
Some learners prefer to work alone, while others prefer to work with others. There is no uniform way of involvement that is optimal for all learners in all contexts.
Therefore, we must provide **multiple options for involvement.**

2.1.4. Universal Design for Learning and simplified language

We write about the principles we used for developing SIMPL4ALL Language in chapter 2.3. SIMPL4ALL Language. Here, we only emphasize that among the multiple means of representation, in UDL, it makes sense to provide adapted information (like texts) with simplified language. Such as SIMPL4ALL language.

By framing simplified language as a tool within the principles of UDL and in line with the concept of neurodiversity, true inclusion can be achieved. And true inclusion benefits all.

If you want to learn more about Universal Design for Learning,
go to Appendix on page 47.

2.1.5. From diagnostic labels to learning styles

Individuals have been shown to possess habitual ways of approaching tasks and situations associated with patterns in cognitive processes, including decision-making, problem-solving, perception and attention. This means that people have a habit of doing something in the same way, acting in the same way. We say that people have different **cognitive styles**.

The concept of cognitive style was first formally introduced by American psychologist Allport. That was almost eight decades ago. Allport defined cognitive style as an individual's typical or habitual way of solving problems, thinking, perceiving, and remembering things.

If we regard the concept of learning style from the perspective of the construct of neurodiversity, we can understand how its dimensions cannot be defined by simple diagnostic labels that could lead to stigma and otherwise negative consequences.

Dimensions must address the multiple and specific constructs of human cognition.
Each dimension contains other sub-dimensions and each person's specific position on these dimensions represents their unique way of learning.

There is still no agreement on which dimensions are correct to describe human variability, but it may still be useful to create specific functional dimensions for simplification of information (texts, for example).

Examples of functional dimensions of text simplification

1. Memory:
    - Working Memory.
    - Long-term memory.
2. Local/global focus.
3. Executive functions: sustained attention, shifting attention, planning, flexibility.
4. Learning modes: visual, auditory, kinaesthetic, abstract.
5. Experiential learning: reflective observation, concrete experiences, abstract conceptualisation, active experimentation.
6. Social metacognition:
    - Understanding the social context.
    - Understanding the thoughts, emotions, and behaviour of others.
7. Perceptual text encoding/decoding skills (for example: visual clustering, phonological decoding).

2.2. Language and Literacy Framework

In making this Handbook, we used a document titled Key Competences for Lifelong Learning: European Framework of Reference (Key Competences for short).

Key Competences promote formal, non-formal and informal forms of education.
The aim is to support people ‘’to improve their competences from early childhood throughout their lives’’ (OJ EU 2018/C 189/01: 4).
The Key Competences highlight that the competences support, among other things:

- Initiatives to further develop and promote education for sustainable development.
- Ensuring quality education for all on an equitable basis and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all.

What are **competences**? A combination of knowledge, skills, and attitudes.
Key Competences list eight key competences:

- Literacy.
- Multilingualism.
- Mathematical, science, technology, and engineering competence.
- Digital competence.
- Personal, social, and learning competence.
- Citizenship competence.
- Entrepreneurial competence.
- Cultural awareness and expression.

For the purposes of this Handbook, we will focus on literacy.

2.2.1. Literacy

Literacy is the first key competence. This is a **definition** of literacy:
"Literacy is the ability to identify, understand, express, create and interpret concepts, feelings, facts, and opinions orally and in writing, using visual, audio, and digital materials, in all domains and contexts. It means the ability to communicate and relate successfully with others in an appropriate and creative manner. The development of literacy is the foundation for further learning and further linguistic interaction. Depending on the circumstances, literacy can be developed in the mother tongue, the language of schooling and/or the official language of the country or region." (OJ 2018/C 189/01: 8)

To describe literacy in **simpler language**, we could say:
People have the literacy competence when they know how to find, understand, express, create and interpret things. People do that by using visual, audio, and digital materials, from printed text and texts on internet to images, videos, and sound.
We can have this competence in our first language or other languages.

Literacy includes four activities:

- Listening.
- Speaking.
- Reading.
- Writing.

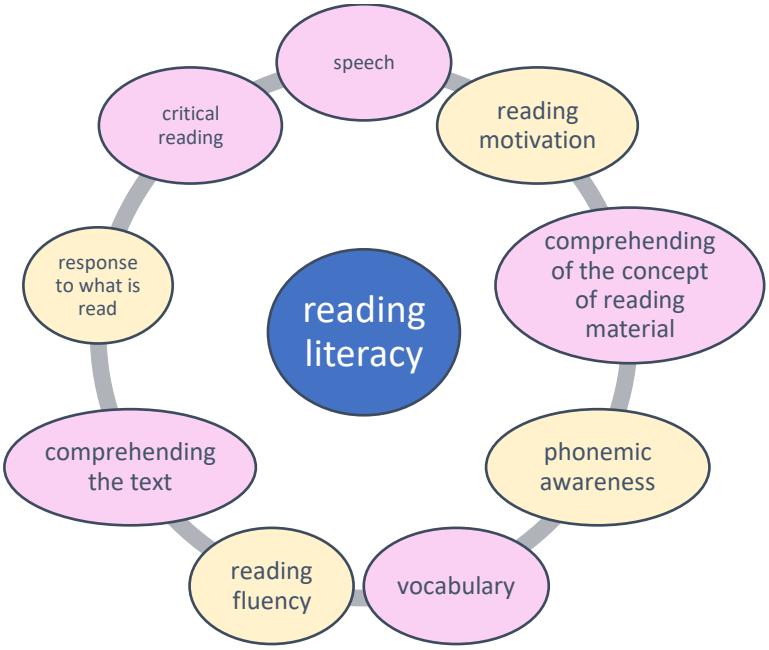
We develop all four activities throughout our life.

We develop the activities systematically in formal education, from kindergarten to university.
We develop them in non-formal education (for example in school clubs, cultural or sports associations, music schools and other).
We also develop all four activities in informal learning. Informal learning is learning in everyday situations.

Sometimes we think about literacy being the same as **reading literacy**. But reading literacy is just one of form of literacy.
We add the word 'reading' before 'literacy', so we distinguish it from other literacies, such as financial, mathematical, health… literacy.
Reading literacy has nine core elements. Let us call them building blocks. We can support language users in all the building blocks. This is especially important if we find that a learner is having difficulties with a specific building block of reading literacy.
The nine building blocks of reading literacy are:
1. Speech. This represents the abilities of nonverbal and verbal communication and the human development of linguistic abilities.
2. Reading motivation. This represents the interest in reading and the positive attitude to reading different kinds of texts. This also relates to self-efficacy of young readers.
3. Comprehending the concept of reading material. This building block is about meaning of multimodal literacy. Special focus is on understanding and constructing different codes of communication for comprehensive reading of different texts.
4. Phonemic awareness. This is about the ability to identify and operate different sounds (phonemes) in spoken words.
5. Vocabulary. This is a set of words we use in a specific language. This building block is about the development of understanding the meaning of words and their use in receiving and forming texts. For successful reading, understanding, learning and communication, a person must expand their vocabulary and use it.

6. Reading fluency. Here, we focus on the techniques of reading for accuracy, speed, expressiveness, rhythm and other.
This is especially true for the possibility of assessing the reader's progress.
7. Comprehending the text. This building block is about systematic development of reading with comprehension with focus on non-literary texts (related to all subject areas).
8. Response to the text and creating texts. Here, we think about creation of appropriate and well organized spoken and written texts about what we read. We use what we read in new situations. We speak and we write texts.
9. Critical reading. With critical reading, we recognize, assess, and evaluate what we read in the text. We recognize the author's way of writing. We form our own opinion, based on facts.

If you want to learn more about reading literacy,
you might be interested in this source:
https://www.zrss.si/pdf/Gradniki_bralne_pismenosti_ANG.pdf



All four literacy activities (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) are included in different scales that measure the general level of reading literacy in the population. This means that we measure the literacy skills of people through these activities.

2.2.2.Language levels

The most widely used tool for this assessment is
Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)
European Level - Self-Assessment Scale.
This scale has six levels. It covers comprehension (listening and reading comprehension), speaking (oral communication) and writing (written communication). This Framework is used as an annex to Europass,
a tool for recording one's skills, experience, education and other.
For more information, see Official Journal of the European Union (C 189):
https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:C:2018:189:FULL&from=SL

As an example, two other international studies on reading literacy are being carried out in the countries that work together in the SIMPL4ALL project. Both use six-point scales to assess literacy:

- PISA (https://www.oecd.org/pisa/) – The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is an international survey of literacy in reading, mathematics, and science. It is conducted under the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).
This study is done in three-year cycles. The first cycle was in 2000.
The study covers 15-year-old students, regardless of the type of school they attend.
PISA is important because it assesses student's language competence at the end of primary school or at the entry to the first year of secondary school, depending on the country's system.

- PIAAC (https://www.oecd.org/skills/piaac/) – Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) is the largest international survey on the status and use of competences among adults from 16 to 65 years of age.
This study tests written comprehension skill only.

Source: Skills matter, https://www.oecd.org/skills/piaac/, p. 12

We could, roughly, compare SIMPL4ALL Language to elements of OECD Levels 1 and 2 of reading literacy.

Another source that helped us create guidelines for the appropriate difficulty of our SIMPL4ALL Language are concepts of **Plain language** and **Easy Language** as described in the Handbook of Easy Languages in Europe (2021), edited by Lindholm and Vanhatalo.
Based on research and practice from many European countries, Handbook of Easy Languages compares standard language, Plain Language and Easy Language variants.

As we analyse these concepts, we learn that SIMPL4ALL Language falls somewhere between Plain Language and Easy Language.
This is similar to the concept of **Easy-to-understand Language** that was defined in European project Easy Access for Social Inclusion Training – EASIT that was primarily about audio-visual information (2018 – 2021; for more information see: https://pagines.uab.cat/easit/en).

2.3. SIMPL4ALL Language

The SIMPL4ALL Language is a level of language the SIMPL4ALL partnership recommends covering the widest possible needs and cognitive styles of people in Vocational Education and Training (VET).

The language level has characteristics of both Plain and Easy Language, as defined in Handbook of Easy languages in Europe (2021), and falls at their crossroad.
It is important to realize that techniques for simplification of texts have been used for decades and had many purposes. They were tested in different linguistic and situational contexts.

Different varieties of simplified language have appeared over time. Although the aim of those varieties is to improve the accessibility of texts, we sometimes appear to have trouble telling them apart.
A systematic review by Casalegno and colleagues (2021) suggests that the number of studies that focus on the use of simplified language in education is relatively low compared to similar studies in other fields (like healthcare or administration, for example). Very few studies deal with students as a group and focus mostly on sub-groups such as students with intellectual disabilities.

In this part of the Handbook, we describe how SIMPL4ALL Language is different from or like standard language, Plain Language and Easy Language.
We describe and compare purpose, target audience, level of complexity usage area, legal status, and producers of each language variant. Those are most of the categories that are used by Lindholm and Vanhatalo (2021, pp. 19-20).

Common partners' practical experience was also considered when developing the guidelines within this Handbook.

2.3.1.Purpose

- Standard Language: Is an institutionalized norm.
  Provides unified means for communication.
  Is used in mass media, official documents and other.

- Plain Language: Wording, structure and design are very clear.
  People can find information easily.
  People can understand and use information.

- Easy Language: Very comprehensive, people understand it easily.
  It provides equality in communication (also, is validated by end-users).

- **SIMPL4ALL Language:** Between Plain and Easy Language.
  Wording, structure, and design are very clear.
  People understand it easily.
  It provides equality in communication (but is generally not validated by end-users).
  It promotes inclusive education.

2.3.2. Target audience

- Standard Language: Everyone. Sometimes experts.

- Plain Language: Everyone.

- Easy Language: People with different linguistic abilities (because of neuro-biological reasons, social background, or low literacy).

- **SIMPL4ALL Language:** We do not explicitly state who the SIMPL4ALL Language is for as we want to make sure our message does not exclude any groups or people that might benefit from our language recommendations.
  Designed primarily for Vocational Education and Training (VET) students.

2.3.3. Complexity

- Standard Language: Complex or very complex.

- Plain Language: Uses simple words and structures but avoids jargon.

- Easy Language: Simplified or very simplified at all levels (content, grammar, lexicon/vocabulary). Has defined set of rules and can have different levels, like for example in Slovenia (4 levels of Easy Slovene).

- **SIMPL4ALL Language:** Simplified in terms of content, grammar, and lexicon/vocabulary.

2.3.4. Usage

- Standard Language: Public communication, jargons, written texts and oral speech.

- Plain Language: Legal or administrative texts, official documents.
- Easy Language: All purposes: informative texts, fiction and non-fiction, literature, news and other.
  Also, oral communication (spoken language).

- **SIMPL4ALL Language:** All purposes: informative texts, fiction and non-fiction, literature, news and other.
  Also, oral communication (spoken language).

2.3.5. Legal status

- Standard Language: In position of official language. Often ordered by law.

- Plain Language: In some countries, laws order public agencies to use Plain Language. With this, they make public administration more accessible.

- Easy Language: No legal status in most countries but there are exceptions, like Germany.
  Also, oral communication (spoken language).

- **SIMPL4ALL Language:** No legal status.

2.3.6. Producers

- Standard Language: Whole population.
- Plain Language: Mainly public administration; authorities, companies, organizations.
- Easy Language: The more (or equally) skilled party in communication.
- **SIMPL4ALL Language:** People working with target groups with different linguistic abilities and learning styles.

When we take and combine what we learned about
the Universal Design for Learning,
different cognitive, learning styles and abilities of learners,
literacy, comprehension levels and different simplified language concepts,
we can recommend guidelines for language that is
useful for a variety of people - SIMPL4ALL Language.

We list and describe the SIMPL4ALL Language Guidelines in Chapter 3.

3. SIMPL4ALL common language guidelines

In Chapter 3, we list some recommendations
on how to make information easier to read and comprehend.
These SIMPL4ALL choices and adaptations
can be useful for most learners.

3.1. Layout, design

- ✓ Choose the **right medium(s)** for your learners.
- ✓ Use **non-serif font** (for example: Verdana, Arial).
- ✓ Use **font size 14** or more.
- ✓ Do **not underline** word or sentences.
- ✓ Do **not use italics**.
- ✓ **Align** (text) **left.**
- ✓ Do **not split words** (at the end of the line).
- ✓ Do **not split sentences** (at the end of the page).
- ✓ Put **pictures by the text** that the pictures illustrate.
- ✓ Be **careful using columns and charts**
  (consider your learner's cognitive style or make these representations very simple and clear).

- ✓ When listing things, **use bullet points.**

- ✓ Leave **enough "space" on the page**
  (line spacing at least 15, larger space between paragraphs, even letters).

- ✓ Allow **enough time in communication**
  (when you speak and wait for response).

- ✓ Use good **enough contrast** between text and background.
  Be **careful using colours**.
  Use colours with enough contrast to be clearly readable in ''black and white'' (grey) version.

- ✓ Make **attractive design** (to motivate the learner), but do not make it messy, crowded.

- ✓ Make **regular brochures** for print (like books), not folding brochures.

- ✓ Use **non-gloss paper** for printing.

3.2. Content

- ✓ Provide **context**, add information, explanations if needed.

- ✓ Organize information in **logical order**
  (for example: present events in chronological order).

- ✓ Ideally, cover only **one information per line.**

- ✓ Use **short sentences.** Less clauses are better.

- ✓ Use **simple, frequent words**.

- ✓ **Repeat words** (same word for one thing).

- ✓ **Avoid abbreviations** (or explain them).

- ✓ **Avoid pronouns.**

- ✓ **Avoid metaphors** (unless they are very well known).

- ✓ **Avoid exact big numbers**, if possible.

- ✓ **Avoid special characters**, symbols (for example: %, *), if possible.

- ✓ **Avoid footnotes**. They make organization of text hard to read.

- ✓ Use **positive sentences,** not negative sentences, if it makes sense.

- ✓ **Avoid foreign words and phrases** if they are not well known.

- ✓ **Avoid acronyms** if they are not well known. Explain them.

- ✓ **Avoid diminutives** wherever possible.

- ✓ Use **clear images** (images that are easy to understand). Do not use images for décor but for (additional or standalone) information.

3.3. Bend it!

The best advice we can give:

Bend the guidelines and means, do not break the learner(s).

The list of the guidelines in this chapter is far from complete.
It could never really be complete if consider all people with their individual cognitive and learning styles and preferences.
But the SIMPL4ALL guidelines we list are useful for most people.

As Guidelines for Easy Slovene state:
Information must be understandable and accessible to the people,
for whom it is intended.
To achieve this, some guidelines can and should be broken
(Knapp and Haramija, 2019).
A guideline or material not working for your cause? Adapt it. Bend it!

For ensuring inclusive classroom, we recommend returning to the very basics of communication: Listen. Observe. Ask.
Get to know your learners.
What are their cognitive or learning styles?
Which obstacles are they facing?
What can you do to motivate them and support them in efficient learning?

Use SIMPL4ALL Language and Handbook or get advice from other language variants and their guidelines, if needed.

For more guidelines and other resources in different languages,
see chapter 5. (Inter)National realities and resources.

4. Next steps

In this chapter, we write about:

- What did we learn during the SIMPL4ALL project?
- Where was our work cut short?
- What else can be done in the future?

5. Inclusive education and communication resources

In Chapter 5, provide brief background on inclusive education in SIMPL4ALL partner countries.

Also, we selected available resources for simple communication in English language, including resources for Easy Language and Plain Language.
Use the resources to make information and communication more accessible.
Important: Translations of the Handbook to English, Italian, Spanish, French, German, Slovene may have resources in respective languages.

5.1. Inclusive education

This chapter is about tools you can use to prepare information,
but also **inclusive education**.
SIMPL4ALL project believes that **inclusion** should be a process
in which we address and respond to the learners' needs.
The learners participate according to their possibilities and attitudes
(NCSE, Inclusive Education Framework-A guide for schools on the
inclusion of pupils with special educational needs, 2011).

Simplified language, such as SIMPL4ALL language
is powerful in removing "barriers within and from education
through the accommodation and provision of appropriate structures and
arrangements to enable each learner to achieve the maximum benefit
from his/her attendance at school," (Winter and O'Raw, 2010: 39).
For the language to work, we must use well-structured tools and methods.

The SIMPL4ALL slogan "Not the **education** is **special,** but **people are**"
means that project partners trust in an Inclusive Education for **all**,
not only for people with **special education needs** (SEN).

We use the International Classification of Functioning (ICF)
to show how different factors, like culture, environment, and health,
influence one's functioning and (dis)ability.

In that sense, a young migrant who does not fluently speak
or understand the language of the country
belongs to a vulnerable category just as people with physical barriers
or neurodiversity do.
They all need support or learning mediation
to fulfil their right to learn and participate in society.

Data of The European Agency Statistics on Inclusive Education (EASIE)
shows different approaches and situations
to special education needs in Europe, like:

- The inclusion of all children in mainstream education.
  An example of this is Italy.
  But inclusive settings are not always example of good practice
  or a high-quality educational experience.
  The quality of the support that children with special education needs
  get can be sometimes low.
- Separate education of most children with special education needs
  in special schools.
  An example of this is Flemish community of Belgium.
  Slovenia also has a lot of special schools.
- Hybrid approaches of inclusive education and special schools,
  for example in France or the United Kingdom.

To compare situations in partner countries,
we selected and adapted the criteria, structural indicators and taxonomy
used in Special Needs and Inclusive Education (EASNIE)
at the European level.

The chosen **indicators** are:
1. Equal opportunities and inclusive education policies and Laws.
2. Appropriate funding levels.
3. Special education vs integrated and inclusive education.
4. Early intervention plans and resources.
5. Collaboration between schools (e.g., mainstream/ special).
and between education and other services (e.g., health, social services).
6. Collaboration between everyone concerned, parental involvement.
7. Individualized/personalized education plan.
8. Support assistants (for staff and students).

9. Skills and competencies indicated by the national policies/in initial training or teaching qualification,
with specific regard to those for managing Diversity and Inclusion.
10. Curriculum planning for inclusion: the content of lessons is matched to the needs of the students and to their levels of ability.
11. Deviations from lesson plans when unexpected learning opportunities arise do not result in the loss of the original objectives of the lesson.
12. Multi-sensory approaches to learning and teaching.
13. Special educational resources available: technical equipment, digitalization of manuals, conversions to Braille
and large character printing, software.
14. Adaptation of school equipment and furniture.
15. Students are reinforced and affirmed for knowledge and skills learned.
16. Opportunities are taken throughout the curriculum to develop personal and social skills.
17. Support for and Recognition of Learning.

In Chart 1, we summarize situations in partner countries.
To provide a clear and fast snapshot,
we use symbols to describe the overall state
in connection with an indicator.

Important: This is not an in-depth research or research overview!
It is a fast assessment based on available documents and
partners' experience and knowledge.

The icons' meaning:

This exists in the country. 

This exists in the country to some extent. 

This does not exist in the country. 

Assessment was not possible (not sure). 

	Country					
Item	**Austria**	**Belgium**	**France**	**Italy**	**Slovenia**	**Spain**
1. Equal opportunities and inclusive education policies and laws						
2. Appropriate funding levels						
3. Special education or inclusive education						
4. Early intervention plans and resources						
5. Collaboration between schools (e.g., mainstream/ special) and between education and other services (e.g., health, social services)						
6. Collaboration between everyone concerned: parental involvement						
7. Individualized/personalized education plan						
8. Support assistants (for staff and students)						

9. Skills and competencies indicated by the national policies/in initial training or teaching qualification, with specific regard to those for managing Diversity and Inclusion (D&I)						
10. Curriculum planning for inclusion: the content of lessons is matched to the needs of the students and to their levels of ability						
11. Deviations from lesson plans when unexpected learning opportunities arise do not result in the loss of the original objectives of the lesson						
12. Multisensory approaches to learning and teaching						
13. Special educational resources available: technical equipment, digitalization of manuals, conversions to Braille and large character printing, software						
14. Adaptation of school equipment and furniture						
15. Students are reinforced and affirmed for knowledge and skills learned						

16. Opportunities are taken throughout the curriculum to develop personal and social skills						
17. Support for and Recognition of Learning						

Chart 1: Education for all in partner countries (assessment)

To give an idea on how to read Chart 1,
we describe state of the art or give **examples**
from individual partner countries for each indicator.

1. Equal opportunities and inclusive education policies and Laws.

With the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2008, Austria has already done a very important step towards the establishment of inclusive education in the complete school system. The strategy of its implementation in the long term is called "NAP (National Action Plan disability / Nationaler Aktionsplan Behinderung)", conducted by the Austrian Ministry of Social Affairs.

In France, as of 2020, providing equal opportunities to students remains a key challenge for the school system. In the last few years, the July 26th 2019 law (named Loi pour une école de la confiance or Law for a School of Trust) met one of the reforms recommended by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development to this effect: lowering the age of compulsory education to three. Other reforms include extending the age of compulsory education from 16 to 18, as well as increasing the resources and the attractivity of teaching.

Partners from both Austria and France assess that, formally, equal opportunities and inclusive education policies and laws are in place.

On the other hand, in Slovenia, some controversial legal acts or articles remain in place, like for example, Placement of Children with Special Needs Act (slo. Zakon o usmerjanju otrok s posebnimi potrebami).

2. Appropriate funding levels.

Austria, for example, seems to have appropriate funding levels. Their educational system is financed by the federal and state governments.

Youth Coaching is financed with resources from the European Social Fund.

France, on the other hand, has important and transparent public funding for education.

But it is distributed unequally between primary, secondary, and higher education in favour of the higher education.

3. Special education or inclusive education.

Italy, for example, has a system of inclusive education in place.

But France, for example, is transitioning from a system of special education to a system of inclusive education.

Right now, in system of special education, students with different needs can enrol in the public education system with special classes and schools or in medical-social institutions some of which are publicly funded.

In Slovenia, system of special education still seems strong.

4. Early intervention plans and resources.

Austria has a solid strategy of early intervention plans and resources in place.

In France, Law for a School of Trust predicts all children to enrol in the school system at age 3 which enables an early diagnosis.

Slovenia has the ‘’Act Regulating the Integrated Early Treatment of Preschool Children with Special Needs’’ (slo. Zakon o celostni zgodnji obravnavi predšolskih otrok s posebnimi potrebami). However, the medicine model prevails.

To improve the wellbeing of children with risk factors, a shift towards a social or social pedagogical model is necessary (Murgel, 2019).

5. Collaboration between schools (e.g., mainstream/ special).

and between education and other services (e.g., health, social services).

In France, the gap between education and the medical-social and health sector is reducing. For example, the decree No. 2009-378 of 2 April 2009 facilitated the entry of non-teaching healthcare professionals in mainstream education settings.

6. Collaboration between everyone concerned, parental involvement.

In France, parents are involved in choosing the educational setting for their children that need additional support.

They also have the opportunity of accompanying the child in daily activities in the home or the school.ž

7. Individualized/personalized education plan.

All countries but Spain seems to have a solid individualized/personalized education plan.

In France, for example, the 2016 individual education plan for students with disabilities ensures their needs are met in mainstream education.

This is done by pedagogical adaptations of the curriculum, accommodations for assessment and with assistive technology and by providing a support assistant for each student (accompagnant d'élèves en situation de handicap – AESH).

8. Support assistants (for staff and students).

In France, support assistants may be hired by the state.

This is to provide individual help to learners according to their individual education plan.

9. Skills and competencies indicated by the national policies/in initial training or teaching qualification, with specific regard to those for managing Diversity and Inclusion.

In France, the common core of the curriculum for teaching degrees includes a segment on inclusive teaching.

10. Curriculum planning for inclusion: the content of lessons is matched to the needs of the students and to their levels of ability.

In France, the curriculum may be adapted to learners according to their individual education plan.

11. Deviations from lesson plans when unexpected learning opportunities arise do not result in the loss of the original objectives of the lesson.

In France, original learning objectives, although adapted, tend to be preserved. This is thanks to a greater flexibility in the tasks, instructions, and evaluation of children with additional needs.

12. Multi-sensory approaches to learning and teaching.

Multisensorial teaching is not yet part of mainstream inclusive teaching methods in France.

13. Special educational resources available: technical equipment, digitalization of manuals, conversions to Braille and large character printing, software.

In France, specific material and resources may be lent to the student for the years needed. This includes computer equipment like adapted keyboards and software.

14. Adaptation of school equipment and furniture.

In France, inclusive school equipment and furniture exist but no specific budget is allocated towards them, so they are not widely used.

15. Students are reinforced and affirmed for knowledge and skills learned.

As seen from Chart 1, assessing this would be very hard or impossible within this Handbook.

16. Opportunities are taken throughout the curriculum to develop personal and social skills.

In France, personal and social skills have better opportunities to develop in pedagogical inclusion settings, where students with additional needs are integrated in mainstream school settings. But opportunities to develop social skills are not consistently taken throughout the curriculum.

17. Support for and Recognition of Learning.

In Italy, this is not true for public education institutions.

5.2. Simple communication resources

In Chart 2, useful resources in English language are listed. For resources in partners' national languages see translations of this Handbook.

Name (Organization)	Type	Description	Link	Free or paid
The Easy Read Toolbox (Easy Read Made Easy)	Image bank, templates, interactive courses, forum…	Tools to write easy to understand communication.	https://www.easyreadtoolbox.info/	Subscription
Information for all: European standards for making information easy to read and understand (Inclusion Europe)	Guidelines	Standards to help people make information easy to read and understand (in different languages).	https://www.inclusion-europe.eu/easy-to-read-standards-guidelines/	Free
Free Easy Read resources (CHANGE)	Publications and templates for download	Various resources.	https://www.changepeople.org/blog/december-2016/free-easy-read-resources	Free
Handbook of Easy Languages in Europe, edited by Camilla Lindholm and Ulla Vanhatalo	Monography (scholarly)	The Handbook describes what Easy Language is and how it is used in European countries.	https://www.frank-timme.de/en/programme/product/handbook_of_easy_languages_in_europe?file=/site/assets/files/4477/handbook_of_easy_languages_in_europe.pdf	Free (Open access file)
ARAASAC (Gobierno de Aragón)	Images	Symbol set and resources for Augmentative and Alternative Communication	https://arasaac.org/	Free

Chart 2: Simple communication resources

6. Terminology and Glossary

Words matter and have power.
In this handbook and project, we choose to use inclusive language.
Here, we aim to define the new SIMPL4ALL Language, designed to make Vocational Education and Training VET more inclusive.
We also explain some keywords.

We define inclusive language as **communication that avoids using words, expressions or assumptions that would stereotype, demean, or exclude people** (Inclusive Language Guide, 2020).

We aim to apply inclusive language mainly to the concepts of Social Inclusion and Disability.

6.1. General guidelines for inclusive language

The general guidelines are in part summarized after the UN Disability-inclusive language guidelines (2021).

1. **We use people-first language** (focused on the person, not the disability). This might not be preferred by all people and groups, who are never homogeneous and can (self-) identify in different ways. We recognize and respect the identities and consult with the representatives ("Nothing about us, without us.") meaning we choose to use language preferred by the group. Nevertheless, we may have to select terms that are most often used and generally accepted to establish a unified terminology.

2. **We avoid labels and stereotypes,** including avoiding mentioning a person's disability or impairment unless it is relevant in the context.

3. **We do not use condescending euphemisms.** For example: We do not use terms like “differently abled”, “people of all abilities”, “disAbility”, “people of determination”, “special’’ etc. as they are considered euphemistic and can be problematic (patronizing or offensive). We choose neutral terms.

4. **We refuse the medical model of disability** and avoid labelling people with disabilities by their diagnoses as this reflects the medical model of disability. This is closely connected to choosing to use people-first language.
   Instead, we recognize the **social model** of disability that identifies physical, digital, communicative, and other barriers that people with disabilities face, and searches for inclusive solutions, not trying to fix people but the society.

5. **We use proper language** in oral and informal speech, which includes not misusing terminology or using disability-related terms as an insult or to express criticism. We **avoid ableism.**

Additionally, we choose to use:

6. The terms **support** and **assistance** as more empowering concepts (as opposed to “help’’).

6.2. Inclusive terms that should be used – examples

- ✓ Persons (or people) with disabilities
- ✓ Person with an intellectual disability
- ✓ Person with a psychosocial disability
- ✓ Deaf person
- ✓ Person who is deaf
- ✓ Deafblind person
- ✓ Person with a physical disability (or impairment)
- ✓ Person who uses a wheelchair
- ✓ Person with Down syndrome (or person with trisomy-21)
- ✓ Person with cerebral palsy
- ✓ Person with epilepsy
- ✓ (Name of the person) is neurodivergent or neurotypical
- ✓ People with specific learning disorders
- ✓ Person without disability
- ✓ To have disability

6.3. Exclusive terms that should not be used – examples

- Disabled persons (or people)
- Person (or people) with special needs
- Differently abled
- Normal (or healthy) person
- Able-bodied person
- Mentally handicapped
- Mentally ill
- Subnormal
- Deaf and mute
- Invalid
- Wheelchair-bound (or confined to a wheelchair)
- Mongoloid (or Down)

- Spastic
- An epileptic
- Autistic
- Special person
- Special needs
- To suffer from a disability (or to be afflicted by)
- High functioning, low functioning (functioning labels)

6.4. Glossary

In Glossary, we provide definitions of keywords from this Handbook. The keywords are listed alphabetically.

Ableism - Discrimination and social prejudice against people with disabilities or who we consider to be disabled. With ableism we define people by their disabilities.

Cognitive style (also style of thinking) – The way of a person's thinking, how they perceive information, what are their patterns of thought and how they remember information.

Curriculum (plural curricula) – Content, lessons, courses taught in educational institutions and similar places. For example, students must fulfil prescribed course of studies to pass a certain level of education.

Easy Language (also Easy-to-read, Easy Read) - Follows the grammar and vocabulary of standard language but is simplified and clearer. Easy Language was developed so that persons with obstacles in understanding standard language in text and speech can get information.

Inclusive education – Education that includes everyone (all students), regardless of their (dis)abilities and special qualities.

Learning style – The way a learner learns. Some experts identify four key learning styles are: visual, auditory, tactile, and kinaesthetic.

Multimodal – Using different modes and methods to do something. In learning, for example, we can engage different senses (visual, auditory, tactile, kinaesthetic). With this, learners understand and remember more.

Multiple representations – This is much like multimodality. Multiple representations in education can be graphs or diagrams, tables, symbols, formulas, symbols, words, images and videos, concrete models, sounds and other.

Neurodiversity - Range of differences in how an individual's brain develops, functions, and how they behave. It is often used in the context of autistic spectrum.

Neurotypical – Describes ''typical'' brain development of an individual; they behave and function the way that society expects.

People first language – People first language is focused on the person, not the disability. By placing the person first, the disability is no longer a person's primary, defining characteristic. It's simply one aspect of who the person is. Using people first language helps to reduce stigma and stereotypes.

Plain Language – Design of providing information in a clear way. Audience should understand information right away.

SIMPL4ALL Language - A level of language that covers the widest possible needs and cognitive styles of students in Vocational Education and Training (VET). It has characteristics of both Plain and Easy Language.

Simplified language - Any form of communication (written or spoken, for example) that contains the original meaning but has some simplifications, like reduced vocabulary, simplified morphology, and syntax and other.

Standard language – Is an institutionalized norm, used by a group of people in public (mass media, official documents and other). It usually has a recognized dictionary and a linguistic institution that researches and defines the norms.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) – Teaching approach that addresses and includes the needs and abilities of all learners and aims to remove obstacles in learning.

Vocational Education and Training (VET) (also vocational training) **-** Training to gain knowledge and develop for a specific trade, occupation, vocation. It can be done at an educational institution (school) or during employment (apprenticeship, for example). It is usually a combination of formal education and practical (workplace) learning.

7. Appendix - Universal Design for Learning (UDL) guidelines and resources

7.1. Guidelines

The Universal Design for Learning Guidelines are a tool.
We use them when we want to implement Universal Design for Learning to improve and optimize teaching and learning for all people.
This means that the guidelines offer suggestions on how to ensure that all learners can access and take part in meaningful, challenging learning opportunities.

The model is based on scientific knowledge on how people learn.
You can learn more on the CAST website (2018):
Learn more about the Universal Design for Learning framework

Who can use the guidelines?
Educators, curriculum developers, researchers, parents, and anyone else who wants to use this model in a learning environment.

7.2. Resources

Here, we introduce some resources for people, who want to learn more about the Universal Design for Learning.
All resources, mentioned here, are listed in chapter 8. Bibliography.

7.2.1 Universal Design for Learning: An Introduction

If you are interested in origins of Universal Design for Learning, see Universal design for learning by Rose, Gravel, and Gordon (2014).
In the chapter, the authors write about how the model started in research and practice.
They explain the neuroscience behind the model, and present the Universal Design for Learning Guidelines.

7.2.2 Key questions to consider when planning lessons

We can also look at some key questions that each Guideline answers.
When planning a lesson or unit, consider these questions to ensure that the environment is flexible and inclusive of all learners.
For more information, see Key questions to consider when planning lessons by Wakefield.

7.2.3 Seven Things You Should Know about Universal Design for Learning

Universal Design for Learning is a framework for the design of materials and instructional methods useful for a wide range of students.
One aim of the model is to give full access to students with different needs.
But it is also good for all students, allowing them to benefit from multiple sensory learning, for example.
Early research about the influence of the model is positive and shows that it helps improve engagement and performance of all students.
For more information, see 7 things you should know about universal design for learning [Brief] by Gronnenberg and Johnston (2015).

7.2.4 Using Universal Learning Design for Learning to Design Standards-Based Lessons

With the Universal Design for Learning framework, you can proactively design lessons that address learner variability.
Using the guidelines, teachers can integrate flexible options and supports.
These solutions ensure that standards-based lessons are accessible to a range of learners in the classrooms.
An article by Rao and Meo (2016) presents a process that teachers can use as they develop standards-based lesson plans.
Teachers can ‘unwrap’ academic standards and apply the model during the lesson planning process.

With this, they identify clear goals aligned with an academic standard and develop flexible methods, assessments, and materials that address the needs and preferences of varied learners.
General educators and special educators can use this process to develop inclusive lesson plans that address all learners, with and without disabilities.

7.2.5 UDL & the Learning Brain

What we know about the brain is central to the Universal Design for Learning Framework.
Knowing key facts about the brain from the Universal Design for Learning perspective can help inform learning design to address learner variability.
You can find out more in a downloadable resource designed for educators at the CAST website (2018).

7.2.6 Differentiated instruction and implications for UDL implementation

In the text with this title by Hall, Vue, Strangman and Meyer (2003), you can find information on the theory and research behind differentiated instruction and its intersection with Universal Design for Learning.
The article begins with an introduction to differentiated instruction.
It does that by defining the construct as the ability to recognize students' varying background knowledge, readiness, language, preferences in learning and interests; and to react responsively.
Next, the authors write about components and features of differentiated instruction and provide samples and research evidence.
Materials in the model are flexible and learners have various options to comprehend information, demonstrate their knowledge and skills, and be motivated to learn.
The authors make connections between differentiated instruction and the Universal Design for Learning both in theory and through specific lesson examples.
Lastly, they provide general guidelines for implementation of the model and a list of web resources.

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