Inclusive+

Inclusive & Practical Assessment Tools for Guidance Practitioners

Transnational Piloting Report

IO1 – Competence Assessment Cards for Low-Skilled Adults

Prepared by CESIE

Paula Luise Goltzsche
Rosina Ulokamma Ndukwe
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Introduction

In order to test and assess the quality of the elaborated inclusive and practical assessment tools for guidance practitioners, national piloting sessions have been conducted in all partner countries (Spain, Romania, United Kingdom, Slovakia and Italy) as part of IO1 – Competence Assessment Cards for Low-Skilled Adults within the project Inclusive+. In total, a sample of 41 professionals (CA) and 37 low-skilled adults (LSA) learned how to use and tested a sample of the developed INCLUSIVE+ Skill Assessment Cards across all five participating countries. Hence, feedback from the people that will be the main group implementing the tool has been gathered in order to improve and adjust the developed cards and render them even more suitable for career advisors and their adult learners.

The main aims of IO1 are:

- To develop Competence Assessment Cards for low-skilled Adults, a profile-screening method, especially designed to counsel adult learners by identifying their "basic employability skills".
- To help intermediary professionals identify their clients' attitudes, skills and competences as a first step towards a tailored, more empathic and efficient approach to guidance.
- To create open, flexible and adaptable tools to help discover, document and develop low-qualified workers' skills.

The general purpose of the piloting is to receive participants' feedback on:

- The piloting sessions in general
- The suitability of activities to the target groups
- The practical applicability of developed cards
- Necessary improvements of created cards
- Other suggestions / additional comments

The piloting sessions have been organised according to the local context, which is why the number of sessions and involved participants varied from country to country. The following table gives an overview of the piloting implementation by the different partners.

Table 1: Overview of piloting sessions and participants in all partner countries

Country	Responsible partner	Number of sessions	Number of participants
Italy	*CESIE*	• 4 with professionals • 4 with professionals and adult learners	11 professionals 14 adult learners
Spain	*Fundación Coremsa*	• 1 with professionals • 1 with professionals and adult learners	7 professionals 8 adult learners
Romania	*Asociatia Consultantilor si Expertilor in Economie Sociala Romania*	• 1 with professionals • 1 with professionals and adult learners	12 professionals 5 adult learners
United Kingdom	*INOVA*	• 1 with professionals • 1 with professionals and adult learners	5 professionals 5 adult learners
Slovakia	*Europersonal*	• 1 with professionals • 1 with professionals and adult learners	6 professionals 5 adult learners
Total	**Professionals**	8	41
	Adult Learners	8	37

In order to gather comparable information, evaluate the sessions, collect feedback on the developed skill-assessment cards and report it in a coherent way, the partnership used a piloting report template as well as two different evaluation questionnaires, one for CA and the other one for LSA. The Pilot Reporting Template can be found in Annex 1, while the Evaluation Questionnaire for professionals and the one for their clients are attached in Annexes 2 and 3. Evidence for all piloting sessions has been provided using attendance sheets and photos.

The following report will summarise the results gathered from the implemented pilot sessions in all five countries.

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Piloting session with professionals

Participants' profile and implemented activities

The basic structure of piloting sessions with professionals has been the following:

- Brief presentation of participants;
- Initial presentation of the project, its objectives, activities and results;
- Introduction on IO1, generally including:
    - The initial research with intermediate professionals,
    - The structure of both sets of cards,
    - An overview of the cards,
    - The STAR methodology and
    - The guidelines facilitating the cards' implementation.
- Experimentation with the cards, guided by the trainers and facilitated by supportive documents, such as:
    - Overview of the cards,
    - Introduction to the STAR methodology and
    - Guidelines for the implementation of skill assessment cards as well as
    - Skills portfolio including the competence table and action plan.
- Brief, informal group discussion to share impressions, feedback and suggestions regarding IO1.

Participants in these sessions were mostly women (32), still 7 of the professionals were also men. Almost half of participating professionals was between 36 and 50 years old, while the rest was distributed between the other age ranges, as can be seen in the pie chart below.
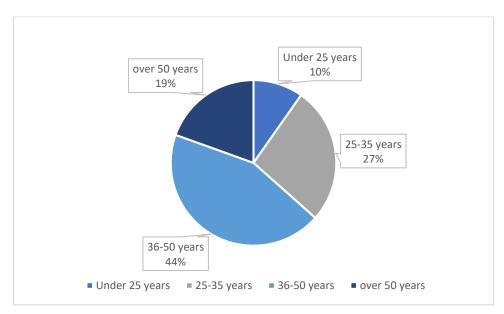

Figure 1: Age ranges of participating professionals

Participants' professional profiles were highly versatile, allowing for a wide range of different perspectives on the developed instrument. However, all of them had a background in career counselling. The participating professions included:

- Career advisors;
- Project managers in social and educational organisations;
- (VET) Teachers;
- Social workers;
- Sociologists;
- Employees in organisations dedicated to the skill development of LSA;
- Advisors from educational organisations;
- Trainers;
- Volunteer coordinators;
- Recruiters;
- Psychologists.

The years of experience in career counselling have been almost equally distributed among all ranges, as is depicted in the following pie chart.

Years of working experience

- 22%
- 32%
- 19%
- 27%

Legend:
- Years of working experience (all countries)
- 1-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- over 15 years

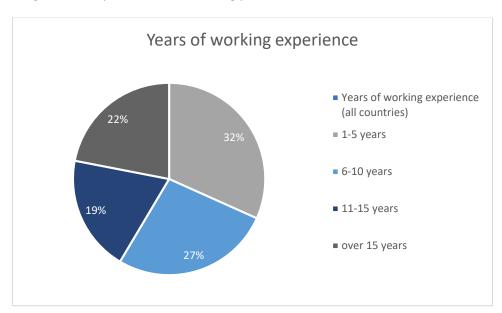*Figure 2: Years of professionals' working experience in career counselling among all partner countries*

Evaluation of the piloting session

The previous knowledge of the project varied from country to country. While the participating professionals in Italy and Slovenia had almost no previous knowledge of it, almost half of Romanian participants stated a high previous knowledge of the INCLUSIVE+ project.

Nevertheless, most of participants in all countries agreed or strongly agreed that their expectations regarding the training had been met. Only in Slovakia participants were less satisfied with how their expectations had been met, which could be due to the fact that the participating professionals, being recruiters, did not belong to the project's key target group and hence perceived the created tool to be less useful than participants working in career counselling.

Furthermore, the major part of participants felt, they had had the opportunity to contribute their own expertise to the improvement of the created skill assessment cards, with an average rating between agree and strongly agree in all five partner countries.

In addition, all participants showed overall satisfaction with both, the matching of agenda and content, the respecting of the agenda during the sessions and the appropriateness of the venue as well as distributed materials to the pilot session, rating all of these items with scores between 3 to 5, with three 3 being the neutral point of the scale and 5 being the maximum of agreeance "strongly agree".

The Spanish team took a little different approach to the piloting sessions, enriching them with the additional materials, such as:

- A skills check list;
- A qualification test;
- Scoring scheme for the skills from 1 to 5 as well as
- Additional questions etc.

Evaluation of the INCLUSIVE+ Skill Assessment Cards

The feedback to the skill assessment cards has been strongly positive in all countries, besides Slovakia. All 35 professionals from Spain, Italy, the UK and Romania stated to consider using them. One of the Italian participants crossed both 'yes' and 'no', explaining their choice with the time constraints in counselling, which sometimes make it impossible to dedicate as much time to one client as would be necessary for using the skill assessment cards. In contrast, the Slovakian recruiters mostly stated that it was too time-consuming to be implemented in the recruitment process, which is why most of them would not like to use the skill assessment cards for this specific purpose. However, when told that the cards had originally been designed as a counselling tool, they were quite confident that their use with adult learners in this context, would be successful, as they provide an empathetic approach focusing on the client's strengths, thus fostering his/ her self-esteem.

In addition, the cards have been generally perceived as clearly structured, easily understandable as well as fostering the shift to a more empathetic and efficient approach to career guidance. Besides the Slovakian recruiters, most of participating professionals would recommend them to their colleagues, as is also shown in the graph below.
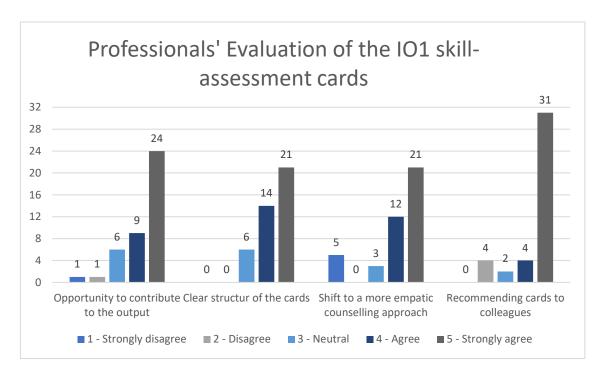

Figure 3: Professionals' evaluation of the IO1 skill assessment cards

Among the positive aspects of the skill assessment cards mentioned by professionals were:

- Their personal and relation-based approach to counselling;
- They allow both, clients and professionals to prepare themselves well;
- The fact that this tool facilitates the individualisation of soft skills giving practical examples;
- They encourage reflecting on the proper competences, even outside of the counselling process;
- They make the job search more approachable, providing a playful approach to career guidance, being intuitive and associative;
- That the used approach is more inclusive and participative compared to more traditional ones and still general, thus having a high potential to be transferred to other contexts and adaptable to the needs of various professionals;
- That the instrument provides a useful guide to career counselling activities;

- That the cards are very interesting, well-structured, give a comprehensive overview of basic competences and are easy to use;
- They emphasize the need to identify useful soft skills/ see them as assets and are nicely designed ("colourful");
- Very innovative instrument;
- The use of the STAR technique in the cards is an excellent choice for career guidance;
- Even not directly implementing them, the pure knowledge of having them studied can help shift to a different, less generic approach in counselling activities;
- They generally help increase the self-awareness of low-skilled adults;
- The instrument can also be used in informal contexts and be transferred to other contexts, e.g. to be implemented with students, volunteers, people who do not speak the local language well etc.;
- They foster the clients' self-esteem, foster a positive attitude and help give them a clear identity;
- After an introduction session with the client, they could be also used autonomously by the adult learner, since they are highly self-explicative.

Some aspects that could be improved regarding the skill assessment cards, identified by intermediary professionals, are:

- The explications in some of the cards, which are too complex and long;
- A selection of "key competences" among the identified total of 53 competences could make the tool less dispersive/ a little too many cards;
- The part of the professional competences could be more comprehensive;
- In some cases, it is too obvious, which choice should be made in the scenarios provided in the cards for adults;
- The number and name of the competence on the cover is too small and hence difficult to identify;
- Some cards seem to be overlapping;
- It can get a little difficult to synthesize the relevant answers if a lot of cards are being used;
- Having a more schematic way of evaluating the answers could help;
- Implementing only the set for CA would help save time and be suitable for those low-skilled adults who are less open to self-reflection, while the combination of sets is more adequate in the work with younger adult learners;
- In the case of Italy only, a French version of both sets would facilitate their use with French speaking migrants, who are not yet fluent in the local language.

In the first Spanish CA piloting session, it became clear that a different layout of the skills portfolio could foster the summarising of valuable outcomes in the career guidance sessions, which is why a new version of the skills portfolio template called "My Evaluation Table" has been created and translated into all partner languages. It can be found in Annex 4.

Finally, the following additional comments were made:

- "It would be useful to think about institutions that could provide certification of informal competences, in order to render them more displayable."
- "The skill assessment cards present a really useful instrument, but should be accompanied by a training on how to use them."
- "The cards present an effective tool to identify the skills we might not always be aware of."
- "Transforming the cards into a digital instrument would make them even more accessible and easier to use for guidance professionals."
- "Even though the tool is really interesting, it cannot be applied to recruitment processes, because it is too time-consuming."
- "It is really important for the implementation of this instrument to have a continuous counselling process with the same person of reference, creating a relationship with the client."
- "A follow-up by the facilitator would be useful. The most important question to be asked would be 'Are the clients willing to participate in further career guidance sessions thanks to the assistance provided based on the cards?' "

Piloting session with LSA

Participants' profile and implemented activities

At the beginning of the sessions with adult learners, facilitators or professionals provided them with a short summary on the project, the cards and the sessions' objectives. Afterwards, professionals and adult learners tested the cards together, either directly starting from the client's cv or a short description of their work experience in combination with the competences needed for the job offer he/she wanted to apply for or using an exemplary curriculum, in order to experiment the implementation of the created instrument.

The age profile was strongly differing between the five countries: While 80% (11 out of 14) of participating LSAs in Italy were younger than 25 years, while the remaining 20% were between 25 and 35 years old, the Rumanian adult learners were all over 30 years old, with two participants over 40 years and one over 50 years old. In the United Kingdom, 2 participants were between 25 and 35 years old, while 2 ranged from 36 to 50 years and 1 was over 50 years old. The Slovakian participants were all between 25 and 50 years old, while the Spanish adult learners also included two people over 50 years. The detailed age distribution of participating LSA among all five countries is depicted in the following pie chart.
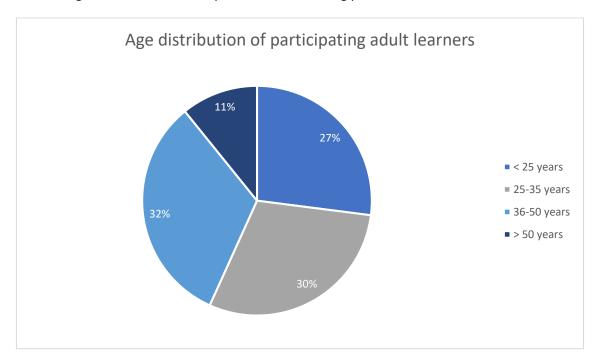

Figure 4: Age distribution of participating LSA

Transnationally, the piloting included mostly participants at risk of labour market exclusion, among them:

- Unemployed people;
- Beneficiaries of social aid;
- Students in a vocational school;
- Migrants / holders of different forms of protection and
- Volunteers.

Educational backgrounds were transnationally differing over all categories, with most participants having middle school or VET degrees and only a small part of them levelling below or above these.

Evaluation of the piloting session

Most of participating adult learners across all countries did not have any prior knowledge on the project. Nevertheless, almost all of them (strongly) agreed that their expectations of the activity had been met. Furthermore, all of the participants expressed satisfaction with how the agenda was respected during the sessions as well as how it matched the contents of the activities, the appropriateness of the venue and of distributed materials.

The opportunity to contribute their own experience to the improvement of the instrument was seen in different ways by the adult learners, even though most of them agreed to have had the chance to give their input for the improvement of the cards. After a little hesitation at the beginning of the session, when hearing the word "assessment" most LSA participated voluntarily and actively in the activities. Furthermore, it was perceived positively that they had been given the chance to express their opinions and ideas regarding the developed instrument, since participating in such an activity was new to a big part of them and they did not expect to be asked their point of view.

In the Spanish piloting session with LSA the newly developed "My Evaluation Table" (Annex 4) has been tested with really positive results: it has been perceived as visually more pleasant and helping to integrate what has been worked on, with what is still pending and the general personal engagement in a more structured way.

Evaluation of the INCLUSIVE+ Skill Assessment Cards

The participating adult learners in all countries were highly convinced of the cards' usefulness to the identification of their skills: most of them agreed or strongly agreed to the items regarding these points in the evaluation questionnaires, only some single ones took a neutral standpoint on these matters.

The positive aspects of the cards mentioned by the participating adult learners were that:

- they help them reflect on their proper competences/ focus on their strengths, instead of their weaknesses, while also helping to be better understood by career guidance professionals;
- they focus on a positive approach;
- the cards enable to share own experiences and help discover new or forgotten aspects of oneself;
- the given examples/ components of the competences are very comprehensive, functional and easily understandable, which makes the tool very practical;
- they are participative and 'fun to use';
- it is interesting to see that there is a connection between hobbies and skills;
- they enable to open up to a career counsellor;
- the tool in general is clearly structured, beneficial, motivating and highly informative.

They also identified some aspects that could still be improved, among which:

- do not repeat the same questions, only in different ways,
- some of the cards have too much text / put less details on them,
- some of the cards' local versions still have some errors in spelling in them,
- the colours are a little intense,
- some of the chosen example situations may not suit every adult learner,
- the text on the cover of the cards is too tiny,
- a French version of the tool could be useful, which was mentioned by French-speaking migrants.

In summing up the pilot session, one of the Italian participants said: "The cards made me realise that I have a lot of competences - I feel really good!".

Conclusion

In summing up it can be said that the feedback on the skill assessment cards is very positive over all pilot sessions with professionals working in career counselling and adult learners in all five countries. All target groups engaged actively and showed strong interest in using them in their daily activities. In fact, two of the Italian institutions, in which the sessions were held, already implemented the piloting version of the cards with other adult learners after the end of the piloting.

Both, professionals and adult learners perceived the created tool as a useful and practical instrument, which fosters the reflection on 'hidden' competences, the discovering of strengths instead of weaknesses as well as helps increasing adult learners' self-esteem in general.

In the Spanish piloting sessions, the need for a visually improved skills portfolio crystallised, which has been developed as a "My Experience Table" and is attached in Annex 4.

The Slovak piloting showed that the use of this tool might not be adequate for the use in the recruitment of new employees, due to its individual approach, which is quiet time-intensive.

In the Sicilian context, it has become clear that the developed sets of skill assessment cards also have great potential to be implemented in order to foster the labour market integration, not only of locals from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds, but also migrants with a similar educational level. These target groups often have gathered a lot of informal working experience, which can be 'translated' into soft and hard skills to be put into the curriculum vitae, using the skill assessment cards.

Based on the feedback on the cards, the partnership proceeded to revise all five national versions of the two sets of cards, but also decided to make the following general adjustments to all language versions:

- enlarge the numbers and text on the cover of the cards, which was perceived as too tiny, making the cards harder to use;
- the personal skill "Hard-working", which is No. 21 and not No. 20;
- changing the name of the second set of cards from "Adults" to "Clients" to match the description of the first sets which is addressed at "Professionals".

Furthermore, the Spanish coordinator is evaluating the design of an additional digital tool, based on the designed cards, in order to enable career advisors to use the cards electronically, a wish that has especially been expressed by Romanian CA.

In summing up the piloting sessions, one of the English participants stated: "I would like to own them and be able to practice with them for job interviews."

Please refer to: Paula Luise Goltzsche, paula.goltzsche@cesie.org

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National Piloting Report Country

IO1 – Competence Assessment Cards for Low-Skilled Adults

Prepared by CESIE

Name of the organisation

[Template of the organisation]

Organisation

Date

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Introduction

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The main aims of IO1 are:

- To develop Competence Assessment Cards for low-skilled Adults, a profile-screening method, especially designed to counsel adult learners by identifying their "basic employability skills".
- To help intermediary professionals identify their clients' attitudes, skills and competences as a first step towards a tailored, more empathic and efficient approach to guidance.
- To create open, flexible and adaptable tools to help discover, document and develop low-qualified workers' skills.

The general purpose of the piloting is to receive participants' feedback on:

- Piloting sessions in general
- Suitability of activities to the target groups
- Practical applicability of developed cards
- Necessary improvements of created cards
- Other suggestions / additional comments

The piloting in (city, country) has been implemented in 2 sessions(dates, places of the sessions) with a sample of 5 career advisors and 5-10 low-skilled adults.

The following report will summarise the results gathered from the implemented pilot sessions.

Piloting session with CA

Participants' profile

In this part, a short text should be provided, stating the implemented activities with CA, number of participants, average age, predominant profession and the average years of working experience. Some diagrams or tables (e.g. age distribution, years of working experience) could be used in order to render the text more illustrative.

Evaluation of the piloting session

This part aims at presenting the general feedback regarding the piloting session (venue, content and material appropriateness etc.). Hence, it should include the findings from questions 1-7 of the corresponding Piloting Evaluation Questionnaire for CA. As has already been mentioned before, the usage of diagrams and tables could increase the text's comprehensibility.

Evaluation of the INCLUSIVE+ Skill Assessment Cards

Please summarize the findings from questions 8-11 of the corresponding Piloting Evaluation Questionnaire for CA. Furthermore, list the positive aspects mentioned by the participants as well as the aspects they think should be improved and any further comments provided formally (Evaluation Questionnaire) and informally (e.g. questions, needs for clarification) during the piloting.

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Piloting session with LSA

Participants' profile

In this part, a short text should be provided, stating the implemented activities with LSA, number of participants, average age as well as predominant highest education level. Some diagrams or tables (e.g. age distribution, highest education level) could be used in order to render the text more illustrative.

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Evaluation of the piloting session

This part aims at presenting the general feedback regarding the piloting session (venue, content and material appropriateness etc.). Hence, it should include the findings of questions 1-7 of the corresponding Piloting Evaluation Questionnaire for LSA. As has already been mentioned before, the usage of diagrams and tables could increase the text's comprehensibility.

Evaluation of the INCLUSIVE+ Skill Assessment Cards

Please summarize the findings from questions 8 and 9 of the corresponding Piloting Evaluation Questionnaire for LSA. Furthermore, list the positive aspects mentioned by the participants as well as the aspects they think should be improved and any further comments provided formally (Evaluation Questionnaire) and informally (e.g. questions, needs for clarification) during the piloting.

Conclusion

Please draw some general conclusions on how the piloting sessions went in your country, you should include:

- if participants have engaged actively in the piloting sessions,
- how the cards where perceived by participants (e.g. main points to be improved) as well as
- a short conclusion you can draw from the received feedback.

Lastly, please attach the signed attendance lists of all piloting sessions as well as the photos you took during them, if you have the permission of participants to share them.

Please refer to: Contact person, contact email

Annex 2 – Piloting Evaluation Questionnaire CA

Tool Piloting Evaluation Questionnaire for CA

I am a: career advisor ☐ social worker ☐ psychologist ☐ other ☐

Please mark your gender: male ☐ female ☐

How old are you? Under 25 years ☐ 25-35 years ☐ 36-50 years ☐ over 50 years ☐

How many years of working experience do you have as a career advisor?

1-5 years ☐ 6-10 years ☐ 11-15 years ☐ more than 15 years ☐

Please, answer the following questions on a scale from 1 (strongly disagreeing) to 5 (strongly agreeing).

1. How was your previous knowledge of the Inclusive+ project before this activity?

1	2	3	4	5

2. Based on your previous knowledge, did this activity meet your expectations?

1	2	3	4	5

3. As a participant, do you feel you had the opportunity to contribute your own expertise to the improvement of the implemented material (cards)?

1	2	3	4	5

4. Do you think the content of the activity matches the content of the agenda?

1	2	3	4	5

5. Was the proposed schedule of the agenda respected while implementing the activity?

1	2	3	4	5

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6. Was the venue of this activity appropriate?

1	2	3	4	5

7. Were the available resources and materials relevant and sufficient for the activity?

1	2	3	4	5

8. Are the cards clearly structured and easily understandable?

1	2	3	4	5

9. Would you consider using these cards in your guidance profession? Yes ☐ No ☐

If no, why not?

10. Will the cards be useful in your career guidance related duties?

1	2	3	4	5

11. Could the use of these cards in your daily work foster the shift to a more empathic and efficient approach to guidance?

1	2	3	4	5

12. Would you recommend the cards to your colleagues?

1	2	3	4	5

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13. Please mention three positive aspects of the cards for professionals who are working with adult learners.

-

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14. Please mention at least three aspects of the cards that should be improved.

-

-

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15. Lastly, please add any other comments related to the overall evaluation of these cards.

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Annex 3 – Piloting Evaluation Questionnaire for LSA

Tool Piloting Evaluation Questionnaire for LSA

Please mark your gender: male ☐   female ☐

How old are you?   Under 25 years ☐   25-35 years ☐   36-50 years ☐   over 50 years ☐

What is your highest educational level?

Elementary School ☐   High School ☐   College/University ☐   Postgraduate ☐

Please, answer the following questions on a scale from 1 (strongly disagreeing) to 5 (strongly agreeing).

1. How was your previous knowledge of the Inclusive+ project before this activity?

1	2	3	4	5

2. Based on your previous knowledge, did this activity meet your expectations?

1	2	3	4	5

3. As a participant, do you feel you had the opportunity to contribute your own expertise to the improvement of the implemented material (cards)?

1	2	3	4	5

4. Do you think the content of the activity matches the content of the agenda?

1	2	3	4	5

5. Was the proposed schedule of the agenda respected while implementing the activity?

1	2	3	4	5

6. Was the venue appropriate for this activity?

1	2	3	4	5

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7. Were the available resources and materials relevant and sufficient for the activity?

1	2	3	4	5

8. Are the cards clearly structured and easily understandable?

1	2	3	4	5

9. Will the cards be useful to reflect on the skills you have and connect them to your employability skills?

1	2	3	4	5

10. Please mention three positive aspects of the cards for adult learners.

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11. Please mention at least three aspects of the cards that should be improved.

-

-

-

Lastly, please add any other comments related to the overall evaluation of these cards.

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Annex 4 – New version of the skills portfolio: "My Evaluation Table"

Source: Empathy map and Starfish

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