

## EASY-TO-READ IN ROMANIA: CURRENT STATUS AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES IN A EUROPEAN CONTEXT

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**Abstract:** *As the European Union's Strategy for people with disabilities has been extended to 2030, emphasising the need for these people's social inclusion, which also comprises accessibility to different information and documents, Romania has to align its legislation and best practices in order to solve its problems concerning this topic. Therefore, this paper focuses on an important aspect of social inclusion, namely Easy-to-Read (E2R) language, which is paramount for the disabled people's access to information, culture and education. It starts by presenting the concept of Easy-to-Read across Europe, its perception and implementation by various countries, to finally delve into the current situation of Easy-to-Read in Romania. By looking at the analysis and reports on the previous governmental strategies regarding people with disabilities (and especially reading disabilities, for the purpose of this paper), it can be said that Romania still faces challenges in this respect and needs to work on making documents and information accessible by first creating E2R guidelines and then implementing them in printed documents (e.g. adapted textbooks, healthcare leaflets) as well as in the electronic information (e.g. government websites). The paper also traces some future perspectives concerning Easy-to-Read in Romania, namely the Train2Validate "Professional training for Easy-to-Read facilitators and validators" (T2V) project, an Erasmus+ programme,*

*a collaboration between various European countries, that Romania is part of, which goes one step further into helping people with reading disabilities and creating professional roles for them, i.e. facilitators and validators, in order to integrate them on the employment market. Moreover, this research will hopefully raise awareness of the importance of conducting other studies on creating Easy-to-Read guidelines and on simplifying the text according to the different target groups of people with reading disabilities or difficulties and to different text types.*

**Keywords:** Easy-to-Read (E2R); people with reading disabilities; Train2Validate (T2V); accessibility; Easy-to-Read guidelines.

## 1. Introduction

In Article 19, the *Declaration of Human Rights* adopted by the United Nations General Assembly (1948) stipulates the fact that access to information is a fundamental human right, which can be sought and received through any media and across any borders (United Nations, n.d.). Therefore, providing access to information for people with reading disabilities is not only mandatory, but it also helps the concerned country's economy by creating employment opportunities and by fostering a healthy community environment where social exclusion becomes history. This access to information means facilitating the reading process of printed and virtual documents by using specific Easy-to-Read and accessible methods.

This paper aims at presenting the Easy-to-Read situation in Romania, which needs to be aligned to the European strategies focused on helping people with reading disabilities feel included in the society. At the same time, it also gives insight into the future perspectives of this type of language that might shine a light on the lives of people requiring it and might create a better social environment for everyone.

## 2. Easy-to-Read: a text simplification method

Easy-to-Read (E2R) is a text simplification method that incorporates a set of recommendations and guidelines that make the text easier to read and understand for people with reading disabilities (IFLA 2010; Inclusion Europe 2009). It is often useful for people with learning disabilities as well, and may also be beneficial for people with other conditions affecting the way in which they process information.

Reading disabilities, also called reading disorders, are mainly caused by difficulties in phonological information processing (Snowling, 2000; Nelson, Lindstrom & Lindstrom, 2012; Melby-Lervag, Lyster & Hulme, 2012) and are classified by the American Psychiatric Association (DSM-5, 2013: 66-67) as a specific learning disorder (SLD) with an impairment in reading concerning reading accuracy, reading fluency and reading comprehension. A particular group of people with reading disabilities are the people diagnosed with dyslexia, the most common neuro-cognitive disability,

affecting 20% of the population and 80-90% of the people with learning disabilities (The Yale Center for Dyslexia and Creativity, n.d.).

Besides dyslexic people, a number of other individuals might need assistance when reading and comprehending a text due to other intellectual disabilities (such as ADHD or autism), to an age-associated cognitive decline (the elderly), to a lack of language skills (non-native speakers or recent immigrants) or to low literacy skills (functionally illiterate people) (IFLA, 2010; Yaneva, 2015; Garcia, Hahn & Jacobs, 2010). For all these categories of people, Easy-to-Read texts and documents are highly valuable as an important gateway to the access to information, culture and education.

In what follows, the focus will be on the situation of Easy-to-Read in Europe by delving into the historical background of this concept in Europe in order to gain a better insight into its importance in many countries across Europe. At the same time, the European as well as the national guidelines will be presented. The situation of Easy-to-Read in Romania will be discussed further. To this end, an overview of the legislative situation on the people with disabilities as well as some statistics on the recipients of Easy-to-Read texts are considered important and, therefore, mentioned.

### **3. Easy-to-Read: the situation in Europe**

#### **3.1. History and Terminology**

The idea of creating an Easy-to-Read language is not new, emerging from the rights of the people with disabilities of the ‘People First’ movement in the USA in the 1970s, being taken over in Europe in 1988 by ILSMH-EA (International League of Societies for Persons with Mental Handicap, today, the Inclusion Europe Organisation), whose values and beliefs spread into all Europe through its national “subsidiaries”.

*Easy-to-Read*, *Easy-Read*, *Easy-to-Understand*, *Easy Language*, *Clear Language* are all terms used in relation to a simpler type of language. According to Lindholm & Vanhatalo (2021: 11), *Easy Language* is an umbrella term for many languages (*Easy Spanish*, *Easy Finnish* etc.) referring to the language that is modified to be made more readable and understandable for the people having difficulties with the standard language, while *Easy-to-Read* is used in connection with people with disabilities, inclusion and accessibility, having different correspondent terms in different languages (*Lectura Facil*, *Lättläst*, *Linguaggio facile da leggere* etc.). This paper deals mainly with the latter term.

In Europe, *Easy-to-Read* is a concept first developed in the Scandinavian countries. *Lättläst* (*Easy Language*) appeared in the 1960s in Sweden, where over 1,000 Easy-to-Read books have been published since 1968. The Foundation Easy-to-Read (today, the Swedish Agency for Accessible Media) was established in 1987 following a decision of the

Swedish Parliament with the purpose of publishing a newspaper for the people with intellectual disabilities, which can still be read in print and online today (*8 Sidor*) (Bohman, 2017: 447-449). As opposed to its neighbouring countries, financial support was received from the Swedish Parliament, making it possible to publish around 30 books a year, a newspaper and also to offer courses in Easy-to-Read, even the governmental authorities providing information in Easy-to-Read (Sundin, 2008). The right to accessible information is also possible through the radio in Sweden, where the daily news is in Easy-to-Read (at a slower pace and with simpler words), a lot of people listening to the *Klartext* news programme every evening (Bohman, 2021: 553).

As far as the other Scandinavian countries are concerned, Norway has a different approach to Easy-to-Read, having an organisation that helps readers to find the book they want (Boksok, n.d.) and a national newspaper in Easy-to-Read, while in Denmark, *Let at lese (Easy-to-Read)* is not as developed as in other Nordic countries (Sundin 2008). In Finland, *Easy-to-Read Finnish* is called *Selkokieli* and appeared in the 1980s following the Swedish example with the main purpose of serving people with intellectual disabilities, but extending in the 1990s to the immigrants with the purpose of integrating them, the need for this special type of Finnish continuing to grow as the number of the elderly and the immigrants is rising according to 2019 reports (Selkokeskus, 2021). Additionally, as regards the guidelines for writing Easy-to-Read language, the Finns have decided to write guidelines by taking into account text genres, i.e. the text characteristics for each audience and purpose of the text genre on how the Easy-to-Read language text is written (Leskelä, 2017).

For Germany, a country where this concept is on an ascending trend, *Leichter Sprache (LS)*, *Leicht Lesen*, *Einfache Sprache* encompass the Easy-to-Read terminology (Candussi & Fröhlich, 2015). In 2001, Mensch Zuerst Association was created and in 2006, Netzwerk Leichte Sprache was founded. These associations are the ones to be credited for having established guidelines that are available not only on their website, but which have also been taken over by the Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Soziales (BMAS) website as a brochure and are used for accessibility purposes. At the same time, since 2014, at the Institute for Translation Studies and Specialised Communication at the University of Hildesheim, there is a Research Centre on Easy language, where the team examines this type of language using scientific methods and applies it in different practical contexts with the purpose of optimising the guidelines (Maaß, 2015; Mammel, 2018).

In Mediterranean countries, such as Spain, *Lectura Fácil* is a relatively new concept and, in 2002, Asociación Lectura Fácil (ALF) was founded in Catalonia, making (audiovisual and multimedia) texts and

information accessible for all the recipients needing these services (people who have a physical, mental or social difficulty), facilitating thus the access to knowledge (Oliva et al., 2021). In 2012, The Spanish Organisation for the People with Intellectual Disabilities (FEAPS) Madrid published the first manual on Easy-to-Read in Spain, *Lectura fácil: métodos de redacción y evaluación*, written by Óscar García Muñoz, who is part of the Plena Inclusion Spain, the Spanish branch of Inclusion Europe.

Spain is also a pioneer in creating Simplext45, an automatic text simplification in E2R in Spanish (Bott & Saggion, 2011; Saggion, Gómez-Martínez, Etayo, Anula & Bourg, 2011; Saggion et al., 2015) based on lexical and syntactic simplification. At the same time, Spain is also working on making patient information leaflets into E2R (Train2Validate, 2021).

As for Italy, *Linguaggio facile da leggere* is still mainly underdeveloped in comparison with the aforementioned countries. The only exception is the Anffas Association (Associazione Nazionale Famiglie di Persone con Disabilità Intellettive e/o Relazionali), founded in 1958, which produces different documents in Easy-to-Read (e.g. laws, guides etc.) (Anffas, n.d.), even having a YouTube channel with videos in E2R on very important topics, such as COVID-19 (AnffasOnlus, 2020). On the other hand, the public administration websites do not provide information in E2R and it seems that the interest for this inclusive language in Italy still needs to be developed.

Another country in which Easy-to-Read is currently being researched and used is Slovenia, where in 2011, the Risa Institute, a non-governmental organisation, was established by Tatjana Knapp and Saša Lesjak and thus, the road for accessible communication was being paved. The organisation publishes a newspaper, *20 Minut* (20 Minutes), as well as other documents in E2R in Slovenian (Knapp & Haramija, 2021: 469).

In the UK, *Easy read* seems to be the preferred term instead of *Easy-to-read* or *easier information* although it is not so used in other English-speaking countries, with the exception of Australia and New Zealand (Chinn & Homeyard 2017). In the UK, the Human Rights Act (art. 21) of 1998 and the Equality Act (§20) of 2010 require access to information for disabled people. Therefore, the websites of the British government recommend Easy-to-Read as important for making a document accessible (Government UK 2021) and they provide Easy-to-Read guides on their official website (UK Parliament, n.d.).

### 3.2. Guidelines

The process of creating an E2R text is not an easy task as it targets different types of populations with a disability or a difficulty in reading or understanding, it belongs to different genres and is language-specific. Still,

some general guidelines have been developed throughout the time, such as the ones of *Inclusion Europe 2009*, seen as very strict standards written mainly for people with intellectual disabilities (an outcome of the “Pathways to adult education for people with intellectual disabilities” project), and the *2010 IFLA guidelines*, holistic and loose, targeting people with different linguistic needs (Leskelä 2012). They mainly stipulate the fact that language should be simplified, that complicated words should be explained and that the text and layout are equally important, i.e. fonts should be large and readable and images should be used to express what is being said.

However, Fajardo et al. (2014) bring into question the validity of these guidelines, considering them too general and superficial, especially in the case of readers with intellectual disabilities.

Besides these guidelines available at the European level, there are also language rules applicable at the national level. In the UK, for example, in 2016, the accessibility standards of the UK healthcare system were published (NHS, n.d.) and in recent years, E2R has started being used for the production of accessible documents regarding healthcare (Chinn & Homeyard, 2017). Still, testing their effectiveness by people with reading disabilities is paramount in assessing the end-result of the text simplification approach (Chinn, 2019). In Spain, there are also some national guidelines to write Easy-to-Read texts, created by different associations and universities, such as Centro de Recuperación de Personas con Discapacidad Física de Albacete (*Cómo elaborar textos de lectura fácil*), Associació Lectura Fàcil (*Resum de les principals pautes de Lectura Fàcil per a elaborar textos narratius*) or Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (*Introducción a Don Quijote de la Mancha de fácil lectura*) (Muñoz, 2014: 66).

#### **4. Easy-to-Read: the situation in Romania**

##### **4.1. Legislation**

Following the adoption of the “European Disability Strategy, 2010-2020: A Renewed Commitment to a Barrier-Free Europe” (European Center for the Development of Vocational Training, 2010) and of the “European Accessibility Act” (European Commission, n.d.) by the European Commission in 2010, emphasising the need for the implementation of accessibility products and services (computers, smartphones, TV equipment, e-books, access to audio-visual media services such as television broadcast and related consumer equipment etc.) with the purpose of creating a more inclusive society, Romania has aligned its legislative framework and adopted, in 2016, the 2016-2020 “Barrier-Free society for the people with disabilities” National Strategy as well as the Operational Plan for its enforcement (Ministry of Labour and Social Justice, 2016). The situation presented in the

National Strategy has revealed the gaps Romania is facing concerning this topic:

- The access to assistive technologies is not possible due to costs or lack of training;
- The access to the local and central government's webpages is not possible even though there is a guide on the creation of webpages for the local and central governments;
- The TV or internet content is not available in accessible format;
- Research concerning the accessible information technology is almost inexistent;
- From an educational point of view, the curriculum has to be adapted for the children with disabilities attending normal schools and has to be thoroughly supported at the teaching level, where training for the teachers on inclusive education is limited.
- There is no awareness at the societal level of the fact that ensuring accessibility for the disabled people will be beneficial for the society as a whole.

At the same time, the strategy stipulates the fact that all these aspects are important for the disabled people's inclusion in the social, cultural, educational and economic life and that measures will be taken in order to smooth this process.

In 2020, in order to see whether the situation had improved, ANDPCDA (the National Authority for the Rights of People with Disabilities, Children and Adoptions) published a report on the *status quo* of the people with disabilities in Romania, showing that, at the accessibility level, out of 1,544 public institutions (social services), only 3 of 1,441 institutions are accessible from an informational point of view and only 76 of 1,306 institutions (5%) are accessible as far as communication is concerned, only 12 % of these employing certified interpreters for sign language or interpreters for people with deaf-blindness, and that only in 32% of cases, there was a person designated to assist people with disabilities. One of the measures that ANDPDCA proposes to be implemented is the creation of a guidebook on writing all the public documents in Easy-to-Read and Easy-to-Understand (Romanian Government, n.d.).

From an educational point of view, the report stresses the necessity of teacher training to gain inclusive education skills as well as the creation of a national online platform with inclusive education resources for the people with disabilities and for teachers. As far as tertiary education is concerned, in 2017, only 7% of students in Romania declared that they had a disability, a percentage that is much lower than in other European countries. The report states that the 2016-2020 "Barrier-Free society for the people with

disabilities” National Strategy does not stipulate any measures with regard to access to tertiary education for people with disabilities, this being due to the disabled people’s lack of training during the secondary education period. The report also presents data from a survey on private and public universities, which shows that less than half of the surveyed universities have adapted their curriculum for the disabled students and one in five of these universities have made their website accessible for these people.

Based on the 2010-2020 strategy, in March 2021, the European Commission decided to continue its work by adopting the “Strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities 2021-2030” (European Commission, 2021), which emphasises even more the fact that people with disabilities should have equal access to participate in society and economy, i.e. also access to information in order to prevent social exclusion, and encourages Member States to support an inclusive education. As a result, the Romanian Parliament issued the Decision no. 103 of 30 June 2021 (Legislative Portal, 2021) in which it strengthens the fact the “2021-2027 National Strategy on the Rights of the People with Disabilities” is currently a draft law, under public consultation, and under the European Strategy, an Operational Plan with concrete actions with deadlines for their implementation following to be released. Romania will have to align its plans and strategies and address all of the aforementioned concerns in order to create a more inclusive society. Through access to different types of documents, doors will be opened for the people with disabilities in all the areas of their lives: education, health care, legal system, employment etc., making them more independent.

Moreover, due to the fact that Romania is at a stage where people with disabilities remain largely excluded from society, which holds valid for the labour market, too, and are stigmatised, the European Commission has issued some recommendations that Romania should take into account in order to make a smoother inclusion of this category of people into the society. The recommendations target again inclusive education, which can only be achieved by adapting the curriculum and offering student support through adapted materials in Easy-to-Read language.

#### **4.2. People needing Easy-to-Read – Statistics**

Taking into consideration the legal facts concerning this aspect, it is worth stressing the importance of having guidelines and planning for E2R documents and, thus, creating accessibility, by seeing exactly the statistics on how many people are in need of these services. Therefore, according to the Statistical Data released by the National Authority for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Children and Adoptions in September 2020 (National Authority for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Children and



Adoptions, 2020), Romania has 854,965 people with disabilities, 124,541 of whom being people with intellectual disabilities.

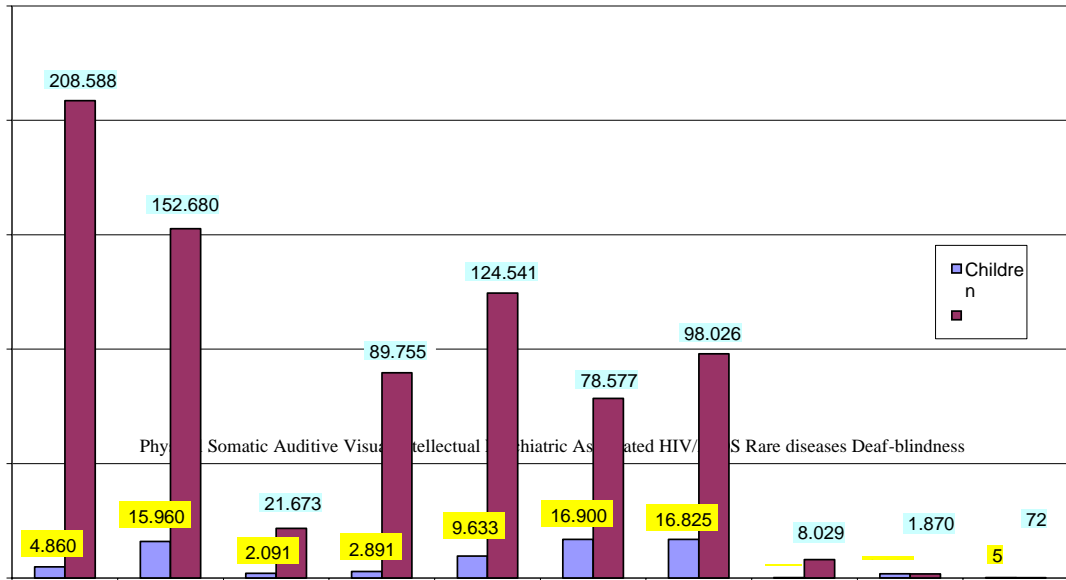


Figure 1. People with Intellectual Disabilities in Romania – September 2020

As highlighted above, the intellectually-disabled people are not the only ones requiring help with reading and understanding texts. In 2018, as a result of the PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) tests performed on 15-year-olds (every three years) by OCDE (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development), 44% of the 15-year-old Romanian teenagers were found to be functionally illiterate (Realitatea.net, 2019), i.e. they cannot use reading, writing and calculation skills for their own needs and the community's development (OECD 2001). Functional illiteracy does not only negatively affect a person's development, but also their involvement in the society (Vágvölgyi et al., 2016).

Therefore, the PISA scores place Romania at the bottom just before Bosnia and Herzegovina as far as the reading skills are concerned. Unfortunately, former Romanian Ministers of Education, Ecaterina Andronescu and Monica Anisie, denied the existence of this phenomenon, claiming that students know how to read, which is the most important thing (Peticila, 2019; Realitatea.net, 2019).

Functional illiteracy in Romania is blamed on a defective method of learning based more on mechanical learning than on understanding the concepts and not centred on the pupil/student (Del-Pupo, 2020). Even though the Communist regime boasted that it had managed to eliminate illiteracy,

there is still today a part of the Romanian population under high illiteracy levels, more specifically the Roma population. The Roma population is one of Romania's largest minorities, the second largest ethnic minority in Romania after the Hungarians. According to 2011 Census, 3.3% of the total Romanian population are Roma (National Institute of Statistics, 2013) although, in 2020, the Council of Europe estimated that approximately 1.85 million Roma live in Romania (8.32% of the population) (European Commission, n.d.). From the total of illiterate persons in Romania (229,721), a share of 27.4 % (67,480 people) are of Roma ethnicity (European Commission, n.d.). These high levels could be due to their values and beliefs as Romani leave school early to get married. The Government of Romania has created a document presenting the action plans that need to be taken for the Roma inclusion in the society (European Commission, n.d.).

Another category of people needing simplified texts is that of immigrants, who choose Romania mainly for labour and studies. According to the Romanian General Inspectorate for Immigration (IGI) data, there were 84,228 third country nationals with a right to stay in Romania in 2019, most of them from Moldova, Turkey, China, Vietnam and India. Besides these, there are the asylum seekers from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and Algeria (2,582 people in 2019) (European Commission, 2020).

After having reviewed the legislation in the field of accessibility as well as the beneficiaries of this type of texts, a deeper analysis of the actual status of E2R texts in Romania is mandatory.

#### **4.3. Current status of Easy-to-Read**

Since reading disabilities should be dealt with from a very young age, one of the most important aspects in which E2R should be present is in the educational system. In Romania, as per Order no. 1985/2016 (Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Protection and Elders 2016), the phrase (children with) *special educational needs* (SEN) encompasses additional educational needs complementing the general educational ones and refers to children with a certain impairment or learning disorder (e.g. dyslexia, autism or ADHD) and they do not benefit from adapted textbooks, the support teacher being the one adapting the mainstream curriculum and creating teaching materials for the different children with disabilities in the classroom. Due to the burden and difficulty of the task, the teacher does not have time to prepare learning cards for all the children with special needs in the classroom, meaning that they have to study from the mainstream textbooks, which clearly impacts their development and learning.

Therefore, there are cases of parents of children with special educational needs who have stepped in to help their children themselves. An example is the case of Alina Voinea, a graphic designer and mother of an

epileptic daughter, who has shared her opinion on the way the inclusive education happens in Romania, where children with SEN are segregated due to the fact that the general textbooks are very difficult for them. She has designed a website (Cere un manual [Ask for a textbook], n.d.), where she uploads all the textbooks and learning/working sheets she has developed for this type of children and where parents can download them at no charge (Figures 2 and 3).

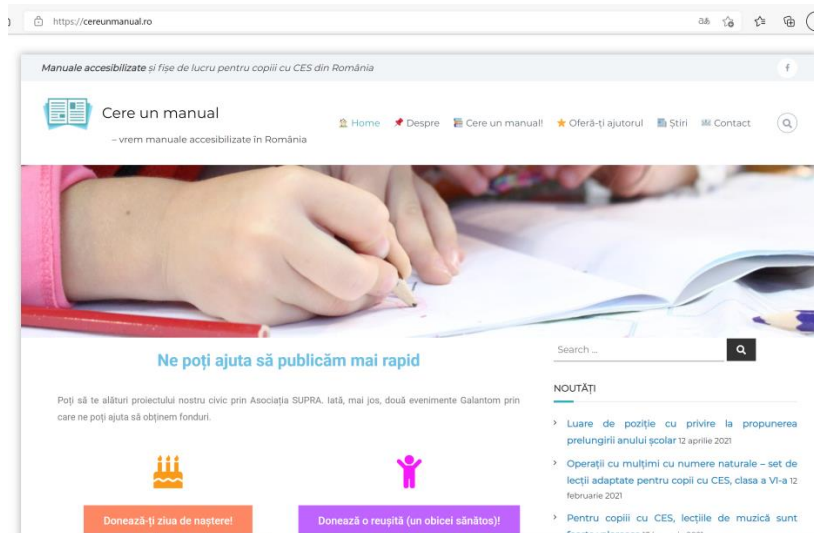


Figure 2. “Ask for a textbook” website – homepage



Figure 3. Downloadable adapted textbooks

At the same time, on the website, the creator of the website and of the downloadable resources has also posted an open letter to the Minister of Education as a cry for help requesting adapted instead of mainstream textbooks for the children with special educational needs (Figure 4).



Figure 4. Open letter to the Minister of Education requesting adapted textbooks

Another such case is the Romanian Association for Children with Dyslexia (Romanian Association for Children with Dyslexia, n.d.), which in 2012, in partnership with OMV, created the first textbooks and books for children with dyslexia (Figure 5).

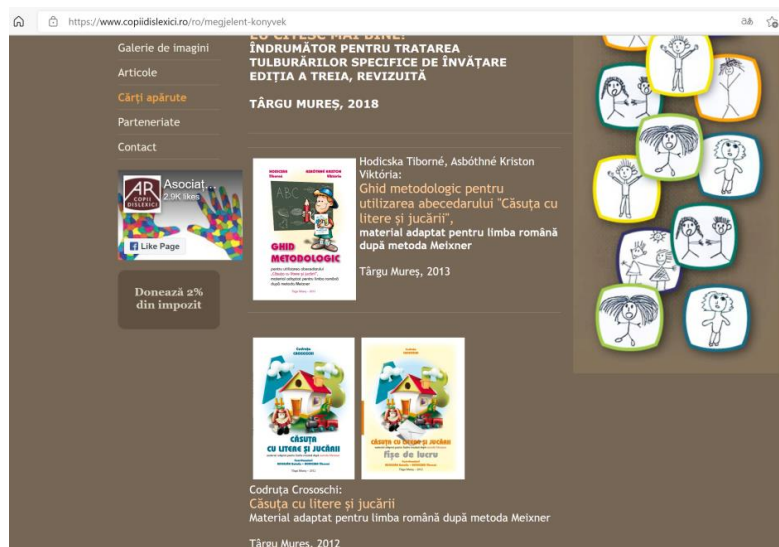


Figure 5. The Romanian Association for Children with Dyslexia website – adapted textbooks

Besides the educational aspect, the practical one should also be taken into consideration, i.e. integrating these people into the society and facilitating their accession to the labour market. This can only be achieved by providing them with the necessary information in an accessible manner, in a language and format that can be easily understood by them. That is why, in order to create such documents, guidelines should be written first. The Easy-to-Read Guidelines found on the Inclusion Europe website are available in 16 languages, but not in Romanian. Seeing that there is a vacuum in this field, the general guidelines must be translated into Romanian. This should be an important first step made by the Romanian authorities in making Easy-to-Read known in Romania not only for the creation of the official documents, but also for designing a framework to help organisations and NGOs write their own newsletters and other important documents in Easy-to-Read language. These guidelines could be later adapted to better suit the different text genres and the Romanian language specificity.

Furthermore, even if Inclusion Europe shares its own magazine and newsletter, *Europe for Us*, in Easy-to-Read, in many translated languages, including Romanian (Inclusion Europe, n.d.), it is important to emphasise the fact that it mainly tackles issues related to other European countries, offering case studies specific to those regions. Still, even though this is not a bad thing and might help broadening these people's horizons, people with reading disabilities should have their own Romanian newsletters, written by Romanian Easy-to-Read writers and presenting real-life examples taken from the Romanian society.

Therefore, it seems that Romania still has many steps to take as far as the inclusion of the people with reading disabilities is concerned and should take adapting the curriculum and creating E2R content very seriously. These shortcomings that people with reading disabilities face during school years, i.e. lack of adapted textbooks in E2R, will lead to serious consequences in terms of emotional development, thus making their social integration harder.

#### **4.4. Future perspectives**

In spite of all of the above, there is still light at the end of the tunnel for E2R in Romania. One such example is the project Train2Validate "Professional training for Easy-to-Read facilitators and validators" (T2V), funded by the European Commission, being an Erasmus+ Programme, which is ongoing and will end in 2023. The project is a co-operation between several European countries and organisations, namely Politehnica University Timișoara, Romania, Plena Inclusión Madrid, Spain, Internationale Hochschule SDI München, University of Applied Sciences, Germany, Scuola Superiore per Mediatori Linguistici, Italy, Fundația Professional, Romania,

Zavod RISA, Center za splosno, funkcionalno in kulturno opismenjevanje, Slovenia, ECQA GMBH, Austria (Train2Validate “Professional training for easy-to-read facilitators and validators”, 2021).

Based on a European partnership and on the fact that E2R is more developed in other European countries, as already specified, where such needs have been better observed and researched through other European projects (EASIT, LTA, ILSA), the project targets the end-users of the E2R content, i.e. the validators (people with reading disabilities who read the texts to assess their comprehensibility) and the facilitators (people who act as organisers of the validation process and smooth the communication between the E2R writers and validators). Although across Europe, people already work in these capacities, the relevant professions are not officially recognised. Specifically for Romania, the main aim of the project is to understand more about the status and needs of Easy-to-Read validators and facilitators in Romania in order to create professional roles needed to help the disabled people find work opportunities. The project is ongoing and the results obtained so far can be found on the project’s website in the form of a report (Dejica, Şimon, Fărcaşiu, & Kilyeni, 2021), which have been transposed into a book (Dejica, Muñoz, Şimon, Fărcaşiu & Kilyeni, 2022). At the same time, this could also be a perfect occasion to establish a set of guidelines for writing E2R content in Romanian.

Furthermore, this is a perfect opportunity for universities to consider introducing teaching Easy-to-Read language in their curricula with the purpose of producing E2R texts, as well as getting more involved in research work in the field of inclusion and accessibility. Research is definitely needed in order to assess the intelligibility and readability of these documents by the future validators. Future studies could also concentrate on the impact of this type of information for the welfare of its intended recipients, e.g. the potential benefits of health information in E2R for the people with reading disabilities.

### **Conclusions**

This paper has shed light on very sensitive and important topics nowadays, i.e. Easy-to-Read, people with reading disabilities, children with special educational needs, accessibility, and social inclusion, as well as on the importance of creating E2R guidelines and aligning the Romanian best practices to the European ones. All in all, being aware of the real “X-ray” of the context could help tremendously improve the Romanian current situation relative to these topics.

Therefore, this paper has posited the importance of developing Easy-to-Read language in Romania on account of the fact that:

- There are no official data on the Easy-to-Read language and content;
- There are no guidelines on producing Easy-to-Read content for Romanian people with reading disabilities;
- There is no adapted learning content for children with special educational needs;
- There is no accessible information (printed or electronic) for adults with reading disabilities.

At the same time, the paper has also mentioned the steps taken at the European level towards improving these areas of concern, e.g. the Train2Validate (T2V) project, and has shown that Romania, through its participation in this project, is also determined to follow in the other European countries' footsteps.

Moreover, this research will also be of importance for raising awareness regarding the situation of Easy-to-Read language in Romania and, hopefully, will pave the way for other studies on creating Easy-to-Read guidelines and simplifying the text according to the different target groups of people with reading disabilities or difficulties and to different text types.

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