

## Comparative analysis of guidelines for Easy-to-read (Easy Language) in Latvia, Lithuania and Slovenia

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Version: V1

Date of production: 30 September 2021

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



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## Contents

Comparative analysis of guidelines for Easy-to-read (Easy Language) in Latvia, Lithuania and Slovenia .....	1
Abstract .....	4
Objective: .....	4
Research design and methods: .....	4
Results and conclusions: .....	4
1. Common framework for all three countries .....	6
1.1. The basis .....	6
1.2 Target groups of EL.....	7
1.2.1. Latvia .....	7
1.2.2. Lithuania .....	7
1.2.3. Slovenia .....	7
1.3 Target groups of the guidelines.....	10
1.3.1. Latvia .....	10
1.3.2. Lithuania .....	10
1.3.3. Slovenia .....	10
1.4. Production and publication of EL .....	11
1.4.1. Roles in the production of the content .....	12
1.5. Language and text structure .....	13
1.5.1. Latvia .....	13
1.5.2. Lithuania .....	15
1.5.3. Slovenia .....	15
1.6. Layout and design.....	16
1.7. Validation.....	16
2. Comparative analysis of the guidelines in the 3 countries .....	20
2.1. Guidelines .....	20
2.1.1. Previously existing guidelines in all the three countries .....	20
2.1.2. Fundamental language guidelines.....	21
2.1.3. Level descriptors and logos .....	23
3. Contextual data .....	47
3.1. Legislation background addressing disability, accessibility, Easy language, Plain language .....	47
3.2.1. Latvia .....	47
3.1. Lithuania .....	47



2020-1-LV01-KA204-077527



3

3.2. Slovenia .....	47
4. LITERATURE .....	49

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## Abstract

### Objective:

To compare guidelines for Easy-to-read or Easy Language (EL) in Latvia, Lithuania, and Slovenia to examine and describe the basis for the three systems and evaluate the transfer of methodologies among partner countries.

### Research design and methods:

We analysed newly (withing project Promoting Easy-to-Read Language for Social Inclusion (PERLSI), Erasmus+, nr. 2020-1-LV01-KA204-077527, in 2020 and 2021) developed guidelines in Latvia and Lithuania and existing (within project PERLSI revised and expanded) guidelines in Slovenia. Qualitative and quantitative methods were used for analysis of recommendations and cited evidence.

### Results and conclusions:

- ✓ Language independent guidelines, such as guidelines for production and publication of EL, layout, design and validation are common.
- ✓ The basis for the guidelines for Easy language (EL) in Latvia, Lithuania and Slovenia is common in places but all three sets of guidelines cite different fundamentals.
- ✓ The target groups of the analyzed guidelines are different in all three countries. Whereas guidelines for Easy Latvian address specifically professionals and students of translation studies, communication sciences, social work and philology programs, and guidelines for Easy Lithuanian professionals from different fields who may need to create texts or translate them into EL<sup>1</sup>, are guidelines for Easy Slovene written in Easy language targeted at everyone, with one of the three volumes dedicated to professionals<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The guide has been prepared in such a way that it can be understood by nonlinguists.

<sup>2</sup> The volume for professionals is written in standard Slovene.

- ✓ Latvia did not have preceding guidelines for Easy Latvian, apart from 'Information for all' by Inclusion Europe, which were translated into several European languages, including Latvian. Lithuania had one example of the guidelines in that translated from Swedish. No guidelines focusing on Lithuanian as language and its properties had been published prior to project PERLSI. Slovenia, however, had guidelines on Easy Slovene "Lahko je brati" from 2019, which were partially revised and adapted during the PERLSI project, stage of IO2.
- ✓ Although the Slovene methodology for production of the guidelines was shared in common short-term staff training<sup>3</sup> in project PERLSI, the three guidelines often adopt different baselines and only some (important) aspects of the methodology are transferred. The most prominent transfer, from Slovenia to Latvia and Lithuania, is perhaps shown in the logic of the markings of the levels, the characteristics of the validation process and the perspective on images.
- ✓ Fundamental language guidelines for all three respective Easy languages are similar but the in-depth analysis shows they significantly differ as regards level and level descriptors. Easy Latvian and Easy Lithuanian can be considered slightly more demanding as their highest levels (level 3) roughly correspond to level A2+ or B1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the highest level of Easy Slovene (level 4) roughly corresponds to level A2 of the CEFR. Furthermore, Easy Slovene is the only one of the three Easy languages that recognizes "multisensory reading" as a part of Easy languages and makes it level 1 of Easy Slovene.

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<sup>3</sup> During the 3 days of online training in February 2021.

## 1. Common framework for all three countries

### 1.1. The basis

The basis for the guidelines for Easy language (EL) in Latvia, Lithuania and Slovenia is common in places. E.g., all three guidelines cite “Information for all: European standards for making information easy to read and understand”<sup>4</sup> as one of the foundations.

Furthermore, Latvian and Slovene guidelines both cite “Guidelines for easy-to-read materials” by International Federation of Library Association and Institutions (IFLA), whereas Lithuania and Slovenia have “Common European Framework of Reference for Languages” (CEFR) in common.

From here on, all three sets of guidelines cite different fundamentals. Although the Slovene methodology for production of the guidelines was shared in common short-term staff training<sup>5</sup> in project PERLSI, Latvian guidelines are generally based on Swedish guidelines “Skriv lättläst! [Write easy-to-read!]”<sup>6</sup>, Lithuanian guidelines on the UK concept by organization “Change people” and German “Capito”<sup>7</sup>, whereas already existing Slovene guidelines “Lahko je brati [It is easy to read]”<sup>8</sup> from 2019 pose a baseline for the 2021 revision.

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<sup>4</sup> Inclusion Europe.

<sup>5</sup> During the 3 days of online training in February and August 2021, the methodology for the guidelines was presented and discussed in February.

<sup>6</sup> Stockholm: Centrum för lättläst.

<sup>7</sup> Capito Kriterienkatalog.

<sup>8</sup> Zavod RISA.

## 1.2 Target groups of EL

### 1.2.1. Latvia

Latvian guidelines identify seven groups of people who benefit from EL:

- people with intellectual disabilities
- people with psychosocial disorder,
- people with dyslexia,
- people after stroke and head injuries,
- people who are deaf or hard of hearing,
- seniors and
- temporary users (migrants, refugees).

### 1.2.2. Lithuania

In Lithuanian guidelines, people with intellectual disabilities are explained as the main target group, however, other groups are also being mentioned and imagined as possible target groups, e.g.:

- people with dyslexia,
- elderly people,
- people with dementia,
- non-native speakers (e.g., immigrants, people with deafness),
- people with lower education.

### 1.2.3. Slovenia

Slovenian guidelines mention two groups of people who benefit from EL:

- people with permanent need for EL or “Persons with a disability who have a permanent need for easy-to-read products “as defined by IFLA (2021, pg. 5) and
- people with non-lasting need for EL.

Handbook “Lahko je brati: Lahko branje za strokovnjake [It is easy to read: Easy to read for professionals]” addresses various more defined target groups. The groups covered by the handbook are as follows:

- less skilled readers,
- people with intellectual disabilities,

- people with dementia,
- people after a stroke,
- people after a brain injury,
- people with hearing impairment (deaf and hard of hearing),
- people with visual impairments (visually impaired and blind),
- people with deaf blindness,
- people with specific learning difficulties,
- people with autism spectrum disorders,
- people with speech and language disorders,
- people with mental health problems and
- the elderly.

In Slovenia, the primary target group have traditionally been people with intellectual disabilities, who are still most commonly the validators of EL in Slovene language. The target groups are slowly expanding to people with acquired brain injury (assessed to be the second most active group now), elderly, people with dyslexia, etc.

However, rather than relying on classification based on disabilities, Zavod RISA promotes 2 types of alternative classification models:

- a. By type of media:
  - print (newspaper, magazine, book, poster, etc.),
  - audio (radio, audiobook),
  - video and animation (TV, film),
  - video games
  - interactive media: social networks and applications,
  - online media (portal, website, etc.).
- b. By mean of adaptation/ type of communication:
  - Easy-to-read or Easy Slovene
  - Slovene sign language
  - Braille
  - socio-haptic communication (touch),
  - adjustments for people with dyslexia,

- combinations of the above.

They state that different target groups have common or cross-cutting needs and that dividing people according to disabilities encourages stereotypes and labelling. (Knapp, 2019) This is consistent with the 2021 PERLSI research within IO1 which aimed to conduct a comparative study of the situation in the project countries regarding the acceptance of Easy language. Namely, the medical model of disability that puts emphasis on diagnosis causes stigma and people do not always identify themselves with the “official target group”, as shown in the survey targeted at end-users with disabilities. For example, almost 21 percent of respondents from the target groups of Easy Slovene stated that they did not fall into any of the categories, listed in the survey. (Knapp et. al, 2021)

### 1.3 Target groups of the guidelines

The target groups of the guidelines, not to be confused with the beforementioned target groups of the concept of EL, are different in all three observed countries.

#### 1.3.1. Latvia

Latvian guidelines are aimed at professionals and students of translation studies, communication sciences, social work and philology programs.

#### 1.3.2. Lithuania

Lithuanian guidelines are intended to professionals from different fields who may need to create texts or translate them into EL. The guide has been prepared in such a way that it can be understood by nonlinguists.

#### 1.3.3. Slovenia

Slovene guidelines “Lahko je brati” come in three volumes, the first two are written in EL and the third volume in standard Slovene language. The volumes in EL are intended for everyone and bring, among other things, instructions for using the web page with the online guidelines, instructions for using the USB stick, which is attached to the guide, information on languages and especially the Slovene language, validated Slovene guidelines for easy reading, advice and tips for producing EL information, examples of good practices, list of Slovene literature suitable for EL, etc. In principle, the EL volumes provide the reader with everything they need to prepare information in Slovene EL. The third volume, however, could be considered as an appendix, written standard format, and intended for professionals who work with the target groups of EL, people who are engaged in teaching the Slovene language, and decision-makers. (Haramija & Knapp, 2019)

#### 1.4. Production and publication of EL

Knapp (2021) divides the process of production and publication of EL into 3 stages:

- selecting the topic,
- producing the content (with inclusion of process of validation) and
- promoting the content,

as seen in Figure 1:

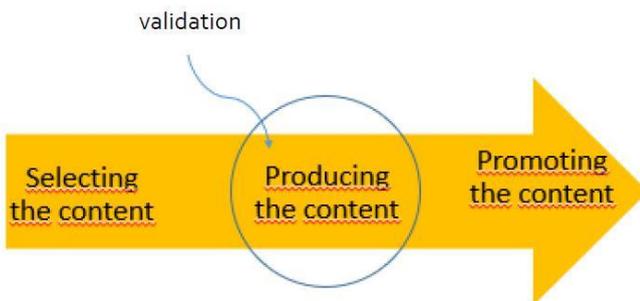


Figure 1: Process of production and publication of EL

The project partners agree on the stages and on fundamental principles of the process, which are consolidated as follows, also:

- ✓ Interesting and attractive information/ layout motivates the end-users to gain information.
- ✓ The attitude towards the end-user must be appropriate (age wise, respect).
- ✓ Validation is essential part of the publication process- working together with the end-users (test –readers/ advisors/ validators).
- ✓ Teamwork is needed (e.g., facilitator, validators, author, editor, specialists, etc.).

#### 1.4.1. Roles in the production of the content

In all three observed countries, following professional roles have been identified:

- author or translator (author of adaptation),
- validator and
- facilitator,
- illustrator,
- designer,
- proof-reader (language check),
- publisher,
- specialist (advisor) on the content topic.

One person can have more than one role, e.g. sometimes an author of adaptation is also a facilitator or illustrator, a validator can also be a facilitator, etc.

In guidelines, most of these roles are mentioned but not described in detail, with exception of author, validator and facilitator.



## 1.5. Language and text structure

### 1.5.1. Latvia

As a basis for development of their national guidelines, Latvia used the IFLA guidelines “Practical recommendations for easy reading”<sup>9</sup> and “Information for all” by Inclusion Europe<sup>10</sup>, which were translated into several European languages, including Latvian<sup>11</sup>.

**Basic principles** of the texts that Easy Latvian should consider are as follows:

- Selection of information for EL text.
- Text size.
- Sequence and interconnection of individual parts.
- Organizing and arranging the text according to the needs and perceptibility of the target group.

Initially, the text needs to be assessed. This is followed by the organization and arrangement of its separate parts - sentences, paragraphs, chapters. The interdependence and cohesion of different levels of text is very important.

The text structure needs to follow logical order:

1. Assessment of the text type/style (fiction, journalism, or informative genres).<sup>12</sup>
2. Visual accentuation, also paratext (titles, highlights, text frames, illustrations, etc.).
3. Ensuring cohesion of information (the chronological sequence of the activity must be observed).

In Latvian, a special consideration is paid to the **grammatical categories** of texts: predication, information, cohesion, integration, retrospection and prospection, continuum, modality, autosemantics.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.ifla.org/publications/guidelines-for-easy-to-read-materials>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.inclusion-europe.eu/easy-to-read/>

<sup>11</sup> ([https://www.inclusion-europe.eu/wpcontent/uploads/2017/06/LV\\_Information\\_for\\_all-1.pdf](https://www.inclusion-europe.eu/wpcontent/uploads/2017/06/LV_Information_for_all-1.pdf))

<sup>12</sup> It has been assessed by professionals that it is more difficult to work with the original text created by another author than to create own original EL text.

*Predication* is the level of syntactic communication. It is based on two opposing positions - grammatical subject or sentence subject and grammatical predicate or sentence predicate

*Cohesion*, a logical sequence of text, is particularly important in the context of test units, interdependence of individual segments, facts, phenomena.

*Cohesion* considers the forms and types of communication between parts of a text.

*Integration* is the unification of all text units, parts, to create one whole (text).

*Retrospection* and *prospection* indicate the linear expansion of the text and are usually in time and space bound. These categories are closely linked to cohesion.

A *continuum* (from the Latin *continuus*) is a category of text that expresses a certain sequence of facts and events in time and space, ensuring the precision and reality of the description. The continuum is closely linked to cohesion.

*Modality* expresses the author's attitude towards reality. There is an objective modality that indicates the relation of the message to reality (reality - unreality, possibility - impossibility, necessity - probability, etc.) and a subjective modality that indicates the author's attitude towards the object of speech.

*Autosemantics* is, on the other hand, the relative independence of text segments and at the same time the dependence on the whole text or its parts.

Other relevant guidelines for texts in Easy Latvian include but are not limited to:

- Working on information selection also involves evaluating the most important information and sifting out insignificant details. EL texts do not use excessive detail.
- Each sentence may contain one main idea.
- Additional information should be included in the text, not in brackets.
- It is advisable to choose a positive form of expression.
- Long texts should be divided into sections.
- Long lists must be marked with bullets.

### 1.5.2. Lithuania

Easy Lithuanian puts forward the following text guidelines:

- the text must be in logical order and sequential time order,
- text is divided into smaller pieces, each section of the text is recommended to have a clear title,
- relation between ideas expressed by different sentences is marked by using connectors, explicitness (readers are not expected to draw conclusion by themselves).

### 1.5.3. Slovenia

Haramija analysed adaptations of already existing literary works in Easy Slovene with following observations:

- avoidance of symbolic language and involvement of vocabulary and syntax of everyday communication,
- the functional type of language is changed,
- neutral full words with one meaning are mostly used,
- sentences are broken off at a natural speech break, they are formed in an affirmative form and indicative manner.

Though there is generally a lack of research in the linguistic aspects of Easy Slovene, basic rules of Slovene grammar apply.

Message organization is very important (logical order), so are readability and clarity (easier, frequent words are used).

Context has to be explained so information is sometimes added, not only omitted, as explanation might be necessary.

## 1.6. Layout and design

All three observed countries adopt the same basic principles for layout and design in their respective Easy languages, for example:

- ✓ There must be enough space on the page.
- ✓ Images are important (and not all pictures are easy).
- ✓ Colours and contrast must be adequate.
- ✓ Certain font size and typeface apply.
- ✓ Sentences must be short, the text should be in paragraphs, with a limited number of lines and paragraphs per page.

Etc.

## 1.7. Validation

Validation of Easy language information, most often texts but also images and multimodal information, is a process of assessing whether the content is, in fact, in Easy language or Easy-to-read. The process should actively include the end-users of Easy language information and is often considered to be a crucial part in the process of publishing Easy-to-understand information (Knapp, 2021).

There are two sides to the validation process: validating comprehensibility and validating comprehension (Maass, 2021). Validating comprehensibility is assessing if the guidelines for Easy language information, such as the European guidelines by Inclusion Europe (2009), were followed. This assessment can be done by the author of the information.

On the other hand, validating comprehension, which includes, e.g., language comprehension and image comprehension, requires cooperation of the target group - the validators. While Easy-to-Read language or Easy language was essentially designed to meet the needs of people with intellectual, cognitive, or learning disabilities, benefits for users with a variety of abilities have been reported (Vollenwyder et al, 2018).

Correspondingly, people with intellectual, cognitive, or learning disabilities are traditionally regarded as active or prospective validators, however, other target groups should be considered for the role, also.

Language comprehension involves analysis at different levels (such as word, sentence, or message analysis) and the integration of message meaning with the prior discourse and

world knowledge, as described by Singer in 2013 (Knapp, 2021). Similar logic can be applied to image comprehension.

Haramija and Knapp (2019) describe two common approaches to adapting the text to make it easier to read and understand. In the first approach, the author of the text works together with the validators from the beginning. If the original information in standard language exists, they read it together and adapt the contents together. As this can be very time-consuming and nearly impossible if the volume of the original text is large, the second approach is used more often. In this approach, the author prepares drafts of the text in Easy language. The validators join the process after the initial drafts had been prepared.

Validators, who are supported by facilitators, assess comprehension of the content. Together they analyse the information and give feedback. (Knapp, 2021)

As with every published information, texts should be proof-read by a language expert who, in case of working with Easy language texts, should know the logic and guidelines of the concept.

Validated information in Easy language is usually, as a proof of validation, marked with a logo. One such example is the European logo for Easy-to-read information by Inclusion Europe in blue colour, showing a person holding a book and giving a thumbs-up, or a national logo for Easy-to-read information, such as the logo for Easy Slovene by Zavod RISA, a purple round sign with a winking book (Knapp, 2021).

Communication is essential for the validation process and is the key to successful validation. Based on practical experience, working with hundreds of validators over a course of a decade, and literature review, Haramija and Knapp defined a list of "golden rules" - tips for facilitators for communicating with the end-users and validators:

- showing respect;
- allowing enough time for understanding and processing the message to give feedback;
- speaking relatively slowly and clearly;
- choosing a quiet location for the validation sessions (eliminating possible interference);
- addressing the validator directly (if accompanied by a support person);

- checking if the validators use communicators, folders with pictograms or a related low or high technology devices<sup>13</sup>;
- focusing on the abilities (strong points) of the validators;
- using simple language and short sentences;
- admitting to failing to understand the message that the validator is trying to communicate, if needed;
- asking adequate questions;
- checking comprehension of the validator, rephrasing messages and questions, if needed;
- using (incorporating) real-life examples;
- repeating and summarizing important information;
- ensuring confidentiality.

These tips help us understand the working (group) dynamics between the facilitators and the validators.

Not surprisingly, asking adequate questions is considered one of the most important components of the process. While some questions are useful and lead towards high-quality end-products, others are inadequate and can only serve as a formality.

Useful questions are most often the ones that are specific and related to the text or image that is being validated. Those are usually the 5 Ws questions: who, what, when, where and why.

Examples of useful questions could be:

- ✓ Why did the cat fell off the shelf?
- ✓ What do you see in this picture?
- ✓ How many cars does the boss have?
- ✓ When was the woman born?
- ✓ Who jumped from behind the car?
- ✓ In which country or where is Paris located?

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<sup>13</sup> Augmentative and alternative communication can be very useful. If the person does not use it and if we work together with them for a longer period of time, assessing whether they would benefit from communication aids could be in place. Try finding the methods and tools that really work. Remember that people likely understand more than it seems. Sometimes a lack of feedback does not stem from possible poor understanding. The validator could also have difficulties expressing the feedback. (Knapp, 2021)

Questions that do not help the validation process, on the other hand, are mostly questions that can be answered with a “yes” or a “no” or the ones that make the validator choose option they like the best. Examples of types of questions to be avoided, could be:

- Did you understand what the text says?
- Is the illustration clear and adequate?
- Do you think the text is well written?
- Do you prefer the version A or the version B?
- Is the text written in Easy language?

Those questions can give false confirmations and do not ensure the quality of the final validated product.

However, it is very important to always acknowledge that the validator is not the one being tested – the materials are on the test.

The above principles have generally been adopted by all three observed countries.

## 2. Comparative analysis of the guidelines in the 3 countries

### 2.1. Guidelines

#### 2.1.1. Previously existing guidelines in all the three countries

##### *Latvia*

Latvia did not have preceding guidelines for Easy language (Easy Latvian), apart from 'Information for all' by Inclusion Europe, which were translated into several European languages, including Latvian<sup>14</sup>.

##### *Lithuania*

Lithuania has one example of the guidelines in Lithuanian. The guidelines were published in 2016 as a part of the project "Puzzle"<sup>15</sup>. The guidelines were translated from Swedish. The author is Ulla Bohman. Presumably, no other guidelines were published in Lithuanian language. This means that, before the PERLSI guidelines were developed, no guidelines focusing on Lithuanian as language and its properties had been published.

##### *Slovenia*

The current guidelines on Easy Slovene have been compiled into a guidebook: "Lahko je brati: Pravila 2 [It is easy to read: Guidelines 2, Knapp et al. 2019]" Some authors also use guidelines based on the European standards by Inclusion Europe (Information for all) which were translated to Slovene.

The Slovene guidelines, which were developed and tested in several reading groups with members with different reading and comprehension abilities, differ from the European standards in some details. Whereas the European Standards, for example, suggest using positive instead of negative sentences wherever possible, the Slovene guidelines suggest using negative sentences in cases where the negative form is more commonly used in everyday conversation. (Knapp et al. 2019)

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<sup>14</sup> (<https://www.inclusion-europe.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/LV-Information-for-all-1.pdf>)

<sup>15</sup>

2.1.2. Fundamental language guidelines

Table 1 shows general comparison between the three observed Easy languages on the following levels: words, sentences, capitals, diminutives, pronouns, punctuation, reported speech and metaphors, but also numbers and images.

	Easy Latvian	Easy Lithuanian	Easy Slovene
<b>words</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- short</li> <li>- easier</li> <li>- more common (frequent)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- short</li> <li>- easier</li> <li>- more common (frequent)</li> <li>- full</li> <li>- concrete</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- short</li> <li>- easier</li> <li>- more common (frequent)</li> </ul>
<b>sentences</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- short</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- short</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- short</li> </ul>
<b>capital letters</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- at the beginning of a sentence</li> <li>- for names (first name, surname; name for city, country, river, mountain, sea, animal; title for book, film...)</li> <li>- exceptions can be levels 2 and 3 where sometimes all caps are used</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- at the beginning of a sentence</li> <li>- for names (first name, surname; name for city, country, river, mountain, sea, animal; title for book, film...)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- at the beginning of a sentence</li> <li>- for names (first name, surname; name for city, country, river, mountain, sea, animal; title for book, film...)</li> <li>- exceptions can be levels 2 and 3 where sometimes all caps are used</li> </ul>
<b>diminutives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- used carefully</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- used carefully</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- used carefully</li> </ul>
<b>pronouns</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- used carefully</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- recommended to be changed by nouns, denoting that object</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- used carefully</li> </ul>
<b>final punctuation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- full stop</li> <li>- question-mark</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- full stop</li> <li>- question-mark</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- full stop</li> <li>- question-mark</li> </ul>

	- exclamation point (depends on the level)		- exclamation point (depends on the level)
<b>another punctuation</b>	- comma - dash (depends on the level)	- comma - dash (depends on the level)	- comma - dash (depends on the level)
<b>reported speech</b>	- bold (without quotation marks)	- bold (without quotation marks)	- bold (without quotation marks)
<b>numbers</b>	- small number numeric - big numbers, if possible, changed by words "as many", "some", etc.	- big numbers, if possible, changed by words "as many", "some", etc.	- small numbers numeric - big numbers, if possible, changed by words "as many", "some", etc.
<b>pictures</b>	- clear and concise pictures or photos	- clear and concise pictures or photos	- clear and concise pictures or photos
<b>metaphors</b>	- carefully used (only well-known metaphors on higher levels)	- excluded; only very well-known cognitive metaphors are used on level 3	- carefully used (only well-known metaphors on higher levels)

Table 1: Comparison between Easy Latvian, Easy Lithuanian, and Easy Slovene

### 2.1.3. Level descriptors and logos

Latvia, Lithuania, and Slovenia have all introduced the level system into respective Easy languages. Slovenia has adopted a four-level system, whereas Latvia and Lithuania developed three-level systems.

For example, the division of the Latvian Easy language into different levels of complexity was based on the Swedish experience at the beginning of the 21st century. According to this experience, it is possible to write or adapt a text in Latvian easy language at three different levels, the first of which is the easiest, but the third - the most complex. The choice of level depends on the needs of the specific target group. For example, people with severe intellectual disabilities should be able to read text at Easy language level 1, while people with mild intellectual disabilities should be able to comprehend text at level 3.

On the other hand, Slovenia adopted a four-level system, with level 1 targeted at people who do not read, cannot read, and find it difficult to read pictures. Haramija and Knapp (2021) suggest that is unlikely for some people to be able to enjoy e.g., classic printed books, so they suggest the multisensory approach. Stories and information can be presented “inclusively”- in a way that the listener is included and immersed into the story. Level 1 of Easy Slovene thus promotes sensory experiences that include the senses: sight, sound, touch, smell, movement. The end-users likely understand the individual words in their surroundings that are used often. Guidelines for Easy Slovene present an example of multisensory books Bag books from United Kingdom<sup>16</sup>. It is a collection characterized by a multisensory approach, storytelling through voice and emotions. Because stories have no text and they don't need to be translated, they could also be possibly useful in Slovenia. The Easy Slovene levels are based on the analysis and testing of different texts and pictures in different media. Each level must address the reader/end-user in an adult manner and have a name and specific indicators. The

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<sup>16</sup> Bag books is a charity in the UK that was founded in 1993 and is the only charity in the world that publishes multisensory books for people with severe, profound, or combined intellectual disabilities, severe learning disabilities and people with severe autism spectrum disorders. The products are presented on their website: [www.bagbooks.org](http://www.bagbooks.org).

indicators suggest the level of a document. The readers/end-users can choose from these levels according to their interest, reading ability and complexity of the document.

As for the markings, the logos for the levels in the three observed countries share some similarities. For easier recognition of Easy Latvian and Easy Slovene, each level is assigned a colour and a symbol. Easy Lithuanian does not have different colours for different levels. However, logos in all 3 countries consist of respective number of symbols indicating the level (1, 2, 3 or 4), as shown in Table 2.

The symbol in Slovene logos is a book. The symbol was chosen by a focus group with members with intellectual disabilities in the preparatory stage of the guidelines for Easy Slovene. The symbol is easily recognizable even in smaller print(s) and reminds the end-users of reading. Each level is marked with a logo showing succession of 4 books indicating that there are four levels of Easy Slovene all together. Though, each level has a different colour and other distinctive characteristics.

The Slovene approach was used in Latvia and Lithuania, where logos also have successions of 3 symbols, indicating that there are three levels in the respective Easy languages. Latvia chose the apple as their symbol as "apple shelves" have been created in all Riga Central Library departments and branch libraries. They contain publications that could improve the quality of life of people with disabilities and could make it easier to find information on specific issues and topics.

The levels of Easy Latvian, Easy Lithuanian and Easy Slovene are in detailed described in Table 2:

LV and LT levels	SI levels	LATVIA (LV)/ Easy Latvian	LITHUANIA (LT)/ Easy Lithuanian	SLOVENIA (SI)/ Easy Slovene
not applicable	<b>1.</b>	not applicable	not applicable	<p>Also referred to as “sensory reading”, the first level of Easy Slovene is not written in words. The stories are told with objects and voice. The “listener” participates by touching the objects, by listening, watching, also smelling and hearing, experiencing emotions.</p> <p>The language is only spoken, and the syntax dictates active speech and very simple, declarative clauses. No metaphors are used. Prosodic features (pitch, stress, volume</p>

				<p>intonation) are very important and so are vocal effects (e.g., laughter, cough or breathing).</p> <p>The level is <i>marked</i> with a logo showing succession of 4 books, the first one coloured in blue, with a white hand in the middle representing the touch or sensory component of the storytelling. The other three books are in grey colour, indicating that there are four levels of Easy Slovene all together.</p> 
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				The targeted <i>end-users</i> are people with severe or profound and multiple learning disabilities.
<b>1.</b>	<b>2.</b>	<b>Text and sentence length and structure</b>		

	<p>Short, very simple sentences without clauses.</p> <p>Average number of words in a sentence: 5</p>	<p>Short texts.</p> <p>Very short sentences with essential information.</p> <p>Language of the texts is greatly simplified.</p> <p>Thoughts are taught very clearly and consistently.</p> <p>Average number of words per sentence: 5.</p>	<p>Very short texts.</p> <p>Limited number of words in texts.</p> <p>Not necessarily sentences (or very simple sentences), can be standalone words.</p> <p>Sentences have active structure and are declarative.</p> <p>Written in lower case or ALL CAPS.</p>
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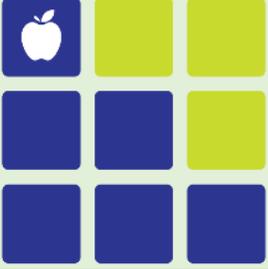
<b>Content</b>		
Basic information only. Everyday topics.	Greatly simplified content.	Basic, simple information only. Includes posters, such as daily activities, different signs, etc.
<b>Vocabulary</b>		
Simple, easily recognizable, frequently used vocabulary.	Simple, easily recognizable, frequently used vocabulary.	Common, everyday words.

<b>Figurative language</b>			
No metaphors, phraseologisms, poetic means of expression, other figurative means of expression.	No metaphors, phraseologisms, poetic means of expression, other figurative means of expression.	No metaphors.	
<b>Text design</b>			
1 sentence per line. The page is not cluttered with text.	1 sentence per line.	1 sentence per line. Often a singular line or one thought per one page. Limited text.	

Images		
	<p>Lots of images/ illustrations (drawings or photos). The illustrations directly explain the text. Very specific illustrations, depicting easily recognizable actions, living beings, phenomena and objects. No unnecessary details in the illustrations (possible distraction).</p>	<p>The texts are illustrated (have images) with examples from everyday life. Texts illustrating each thought help readers understand texts.</p>
		<p>Clear and precise images (drawings or photos). Images provide important addition. Sometimes, only images are used (standalone images with no text, must be very clear and comprehensible).</p>

Markings		
	<p>A square logo with 9 fields, three square fields x three rows, the first row containing 1 blue square field and two green, the second row containing two blue square fields and one green and the third row containing three blue square fields. The blue field in the first row is marked with a white symbol shaped like an apple.</p>	<p>A logo showing succession of 3 leaves outlines, the first one filled in with black colour. The other two leaves are in only outlines, indicating that there are three levels of Easy Lithuanian all together.</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div>
		<p>A logo showing succession of 4 books, the first two coloured in green. The other two books are in grey colour, indicating that there are four levels of Easy Slovene all together.<sup>17</sup></p> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div>

<sup>17</sup> Easy Language for children follows a similar level logic. However, instead of a book, the symbol is a candy.

			
<b>Target groups (end-users)</b>			
<p>People with very severe reading difficulties (reading very slowly or with other support) and/or low language skills who need as easy to understand language as possible.</p>	<p>People who experience significant cognitive challenges (e.g., people with more severe intellectual disabilities).</p> <p>The texts can also be useful for people who have just started learning the Lithuanian language.</p>	<p>Not specified, end-users choose the level based on their needs.</p>	

		CEFR alignment		
		The choice of vocabulary corresponds to level A1.	Roughly equivalent to A1.	not applicable
<b>2.</b>	<b>3.</b>	<b>Text and sentence length and structure</b>		
		Simple sentences, no clauses.	Short texts convey the most important information on a particular topic.	Short, very simple text with active, simple sentences that are either declarative or interrogative.

			<p>The language of texts at this level is greatly simplified.</p> <p>Relatively short sentences.</p> <p>A sentence consists of an average of 7 words.</p>	<p>Uppercase or lowercase letters (A, a) can be used.</p> <p>Sentences may already consist of several clauses but only one clause should be written in each line.</p> <p>A sentence consists of 5 to 7 words.</p> <p>Dialogue can be used.</p>
		<b>Content</b>		
		<p>Familiar, specific topics.</p> <p>Additional details may be added to the basic information if required.</p> <p>Sequential presentation of thought, following chronology and logic of action.</p>	<p>New and more detailed information is introduced gradually in the text, only when the information is necessary.</p> <p>The content is greatly simplified.</p> <p>Thoughts are taught very clearly and consistently.</p>	<p>Different topics.</p> <p>The content is quite simplified.</p>

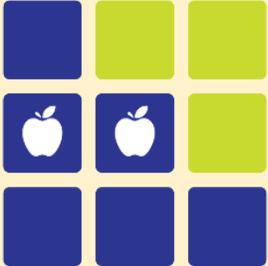
			Basic information or more complex thoughts are illustrated with pictures.	
<b>Vocabulary</b>				
	Simple, everyday vocabulary.	Simple, everyday vocabulary.	Simple, everyday vocabulary.	Hard words are explained.
<b>Figurative language</b>				
	Metaphors, phraseologisms, poetic means of expression, other figurative means of expression are not used.	Metaphors, phraseologisms, poetic means of expression, other figurative means of expression are not used.	No metaphors.	Slang is sometimes used for reasons of comprehension.

Text design			
		<p>1 sentence per line. There may be more text on the page, but the density should be controlled.</p>	<p>1 sentence per line.</p>
			<p>1 sentence per line. At least 40% of clear page.</p>



<b>Images</b>		
<p>Enough illustrations (drawings or photos).          Illustrations explain the main idea or action.          Illustrations are specific, depicting easily recognizable actions, living beings, phenomena, and objects.          There are no unnecessary details in the illustrations that could distract.</p>	<p>Text is illustrated with images from everyday life.          Basic information or more complex thoughts are illustrated with pictures.</p>	<p>Images are very important as additional or standalone information.          Clear and precise.          If the images bring relatively complicated topics, standalone images or images with little text can be considered level 3.</p>
<b>Markings</b>		
<p>A square logo with 9 fields, three square fields x three rows, the first row containing 1 blue square field and two green, the second row containing</p>	<p>A logo showing succession of 3 leaves outlines, the first two filled in with black colour. The last leaf is only an outline, indicating that there are</p>	<p>A logo showing succession of 4 books, the first three coloured in yellow. The last book is in grey</p>



	<p>two blue square fields and one green and the third row containing three blue square fields. The blue fields in the second row are marked with a white symbol shaped like an apple.</p> 	<p>three levels of Easy Lithuanian all together.</p> 	<p>colour, indicating that there are four levels of Easy Slovene all together.</p> 
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<b>Target groups (end-users)</b>		
End-users with moderate reading difficulties (able to read on their own) and / or poor language skills that require easy-to-understand language.	End-users with cognitive challenges (e.g., people with moderate intellectual disability).  Useful for people whose native language is not Lithuanian, but who have already acquired the basics of the language.	Not specified, end-users choose the level based on their needs.
<b>CEFR alignment</b>		
The choice of vocabulary corresponds to level A2.	Approximately equivalent to level A2.	Roughly equivalent to A1.

<b>3.</b>	<b>4.</b>	<b>Text and sentence length and structure</b>		
	<p>Medium length sentences.</p> <p>Sometimes sentences with clauses are allowed without the use of complex sentence constructions.</p>	<p>Text sentences can be slightly longer.</p> <p>1 sentence averages 10 words.</p> <p>Thoughts are presented clearly and consistently, illustrated with examples from everyday life if necessary.</p>	<p>Active structure of sentences.</p> <p>Declarative, interrogative and exclamatic clauses.</p> <p>Simple but longer sentences.</p> <p>Usually lowercase letters.</p> <p>Clear and comprehensible multi-clause sentences are allowed.</p> <p>Sentences may contain 10 or more words, There may be up to 20 words in a sentence.</p> <p>Several punctuation marks are used, in addition to the full stop also exclamation mark, question mark and comma.</p>	

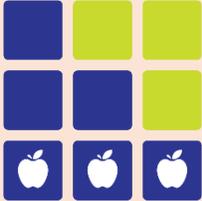


<b>Content</b>		
<p>Various topics.</p> <p>Basic information is supplemented with details.</p> <p>Sequential presentation of thought, following chronology and logic of action.</p> <p>Minor deviations are possible, for example, in fiction.</p>	<p>Basic information and clear details.</p> <p>Thoughts are presented clearly and consistently.</p> <p>Texts may include topics for professionals in various fields, but their content and language have been simplified in a way that is comprehensible to the general public.</p>	<p>Various topics.</p>
<b>Vocabulary</b>		
<p>Simple vocabulary.</p> <p>Complicated words are explained.</p>	<p>Simple vocabulary.</p> <p>Complicated words are explained.</p>	<p>Simple vocabulary.</p> <p>Complicated words are explained.</p>

<b>Figurative language</b>		
Metaphors, phraseologisms, poetic means of expression, other figurative means of expression are used infrequently and explained.	Metaphors, phraseologisms, poetic means of expression, other figurative means of expression are used infrequently and explained.	Very well known and commonly used metaphors might be used and explained, if needed. Slang is sometimes used for reasons of comprehension.
<b>Text design</b>		
1 sentence per line. If a sentence is longer than one line, it is divided where a logical pause is to be made. The text is arranged in clear, short paragraphs.	1 sentence per line. Short paragraphs.	1 clause per line (if more clauses in a sentence). The text is arranged in clear, short paragraphs. Headings and sub-headings are common.

Images		
	<p>Illustrations (drawings or photographs) are desirable, but may be not that numerous.</p> <p>Illustrations explain the main idea or action.</p> <p>Illustrations specific, without abstraction.</p> <p>There is not much detail in the illustrations.</p>	<p>Illustrations with examples from everyday life if necessary.</p> <p>The texts can be supplemented with pictures for quicken comprehension.</p>
		<p>Images are important as additional or standalone information.</p> <p>Clear and precise.</p>



Markings		
<p>A square logo with 9 fields, three square fields x three rows, the first row containing 1 blue square field and two green, the second row containing two blue square fields and one green and the third row containing three blue square fields. The blue fields in the third row are marked with a white symbol shaped like an apple.</p> 	<p>A logo showing succession of 3 black leaves (icons).</p> 	<p>A logo showing succession of 4 red books.</p> 

Target groups (end-users)		
End-users with mild reading difficulties and/or insufficient language skills.	End-users with lower education and literacy. Suitable for advanced users of the Lithuanian language as a foreign language or people who experience minor cognitive challenges.	Not specified, end-users choose the level based on their needs.
CEFR alignment		
The choice of vocabulary corresponds to level B1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).	Roughly equivalent to A2 + / B1.	Roughly equivalent to A2.





2020-1-LV01-KA204-077527



46

*Table 2: Level indicators for Easy Latvian, Easy Lithuanian, and Easy Slovene*

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



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### 3. Contextual data

#### 3.1. Legislation background addressing disability, accessibility, Easy language, Plain language

##### 3.2.1. Latvia

In Latvian legislation, the requirement to use Easy language was strengthened in 2007 by Cabinet Regulation No. 171 “Procedures by which Institutions Place Information on the Internet”, where Article III (11.15) establishes that " the section "Easy to Read" shall, in readily comprehensible language include a short descriptive information regarding the institution and other information, which the institution deems necessary.", while the latest amendments to Article II (6) include: " The institution shall create information on the official website and mobile application so that it is easy to understand and perceive for the user in terms of the content, structure, and visual appearance. "<sup>18</sup> (Cabinet Regulation No. 171 (2007), No. 611 (2018), No. 445 (2020)). Latvia has also adopted the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006).

##### 3.1. Lithuania

*Pending.*

##### 3.2. Slovenia

Slovenia signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2008. The Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities Act (2010) speaks of accessibility of information, communication. Article 7 only mentions people with sensory disabilities and adaptations for them, but does not mention, e.g., people with head injuries or intellectual disabilities, nor does it mention Easy Language, however, Article 14 declares inaccessibility to information to be a form of discrimination.

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<sup>18</sup> Cabinet Regulation No. 171 (2007), No. 611 (2018), No. 445 (2020).

Protection Against Discrimination Act (2016) speaks about information in an easily readable and comprehensible form.

Resolution on the National Program for Language Policy 2014–2018 and Resolution 2020-2024 include people with intellectual disabilities and Easy language and state they must fulfil their communication needs in alternative ways analysis of the actual situation.

(Knapp & Haramija, 2021)



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