VALCHILD

Evaluation report analysing the results of the workshops E1-E2-E3

Output Type: Intellectual Output

PROMEA

June 2021

Versions	Date	Changes	Type of	Delivered by

Project acronym: VALCHILD

Project name: Validation of non-formal and informal learning in child-minding

Project code: 2018-1-IE01-KA202-038797

Document History

Version 1.0	22/04/2021	Initial document	-	PROMEA
Version 2.0	27/4/2021	Edited	Minor changes	PROMEA
Version 3.0	16/6/2021	Final	After partners' review	PROMEA

Document Information

Document ID name: VALCHILD_IO_O4-T1_Evaluation report_2021-06-16

Document title: Evaluation report analysing the results of workshops E1-E2-E3

Output Type: Intellectual Output

Date of Delivery: 16/06/2021

Activity Type: Evaluation report

Activity Leader: PROMEA

Dissemination level: Public

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Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION

This document provides the evaluation and validation results of the "VALCHILD assessment and validation toolbox" developed under Intellectual Output 2 along with results coming from methods reviewing the "VALCHILD recommendations and certifications scheme", which was developed within the framework of Intellectual Output 3. The validation was conducted by pilot testing the VALCHILD outputs in dedicated online sessions. The VALCHILD "assessment and validation toolbox" comprises of assessment tools to be used by validation professionals for assessing and validating childminders' previously acquired skills and knowledge. The VALCHILD "recommendation and certifications scheme" includes the actual procedure following up the assessment results; a summary confirming the learners' achievements against pre-set data.

In particular, the project included the organisation of two one-day virtual pilot sessions by each partner (ECI, IPERIA and ISPA) - in the form of small-scale webinars - with the participation of relevant stakeholders such as certified bodies & institutions, sector employers, field experts, as well as practitioners in childminding. Webinars' participants were invited to trial/use the VALCHILD developed materials and assess their quality and effectiveness in addressing childminders' Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning (VNIL) needs. They also provided useful feedback for the optimisation and revision of the materials, thus contributing to the valorisation and transferability of project results.

This report presents the results and main findings from the evaluation and validation process – as drawn from the online events and the interviews

conducted with selected individuals[1] – and provides specific recommendations for the improvement and fine-tuning of the toolbox.

The overarching purpose of this process was to identify strengths, vulnerabilities and opportunities for improving for the VALCHILD toolbox (02) and certification scheme (O3).

In total, 139 members of target groups, childminders and validation experts, took part in the online events, contributing to the validation of the VALCHILD resources. Overall, the process received very positive feedback and comments from testing participants concerning the educational value and usefulness of VALCHILD materials.

The report is organized as follows: Section 2 provides an overview of the methodology employed, while Section 3 presents the evaluation results gathered from the feedback received. Section 4 comprises the conclusions drawn from the assessment implemented with childminders and validation experts, and finally, Section 5 presents suggestions for further improvement.

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[1] The evaluation and validation of project outputs was carried out with participants, who represent the real or potential users of the "Competence profile and portfolio" and the "VALCHILD Assessment and Validation Scheme". Stakeholders involved were:

- Trainers/ validation practitioners in the childcare sector
- Sectoral representatives and public policy making authorities
- Representatives from the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Vocational Training and Social dialogue, the National Agency of Validation, Certification, VET (ANQEP) and private training providers.
- Centres forQualification and VET performing Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competences (RVCC).

2. METHODOLOGY EMPLOYED

2.1 Purpose and scope

The testing process was carried out with the aim to assess and validate the value and effectiveness of the VALCHILD tools and materials and gather useful feedback for the optimisation and revision of the materials and the toolbox itself. The objectives of the testing process were, to:

- Demonstrate VALCHILD outputs to actual members of target groups.
- Motivate childminders to undertake validation through the project's tools and benefit from the recommendations and certification scheme.
- Assess the conceptual design and the effectiveness of VALCHILD materials in addressing the needs of childminders and validation practitioners.
- Evaluate whether the VALCHILD materials function as intended, and identify weaknesses and areas where improvements may be required to increase usability and practicality.
- Gather feedback and suggestions from stakeholders on how to improve the VALCHILD validation procedure.
- Fine-tune the VALCHILD materials based on target groups' feedback and evaluation.
- Verify/validate the usefulness and added value of the VALCHILD materials, in comparison with existing relevant offerings/solutions.
- Secure a preliminary "soft" commitment from stakeholders in exploiting VALCHILD materials in the context of own activities.

The scope and details of the small-scale webinars delivery are concisely presented as follows:

- Testing object: VALCHILD Toolbox & Certification scheme
- Versions / Languages: FR, EN, PT
- Start / End Date: 25 of January 2021 - 29 January 2021

- Duration: One day per webinar, six days in total. Actual dates: ECI workshops on 26th & 28th of January 2021, IPERIA workshops on 25th and 29th of January 2021, ISPA workshops on 26th and 28th of January.

- Number of Participants: In total 139 participants attended the 6 workshops and responded to assessment tools.

- Type of Participants: Childminders, organization staff, invited academics, other validation experts.

- Data collection tools employed: on-line semi-structured questionnaire, discussion guide for focus groups, follow-up on-line open-ended questionnaires.

2.2 Testing Format

Testing sessions, whereas initially planned to take place on-site and take the form of a workshop with the presence and active participation of target groups, were finally delivered virtually (online) due to the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, in full compliance with Erasmus+ Programme guidelines.

In that context, the partnership employed a remote process to evaluate the relevance and usability of the VALCHILD outputs. This means that partners (moderators) and target groups were in different locations during the testing, yet in constant communication with each other.

The VALCHILD partnership ran a moderated testing/validation session where a representative from each hosting organisation, undertook to run/moderate the evaluation and testing procedure, providing detailed instructions and support to testing participants on how to progress through the testing and feedback provision sessions. Moderators were live, "on the line" with testing participants, guiding them through the tasks, answering their questions, and responding to their feedback in real time.

In more details, each partner held two online workshops, one for childminders assessing the VALCHILD toolbox (IO2) and one for validation experts assessing the VALCHILD certification scheme (IO3). However, partners decided to use different tools in order to gather and assess the feedback provided by participants. Specifically:

- **IPERIA** collected the feedback provided by childminders assessing the toolbox during the first workshop through a **focus group**.
- **IPERIA** collected the feedback provided by validation experts assessing the validation scheme during the second workshop using an **on-line semi-structured questionnaire** and a **focus group**.
- **ECI** collected the feedback provided by childminders assessing the toolbox during the first workshop using a **focus group.**

- **ECI** collected the feedback provided by validation experts assessing the validation scheme during the second workshop using an on-line semi-**structured questionnaire.**
- **ISPA** collected the feedback provided by childminders assessing the toolbox during the first workshop via a **focus group**.
- **ISPA** collected the feedback provided by validation experts assessing the validation scheme during the second workshop via **focus groups** and a **follow-up on-line open-ended questionnaire**.

2.3 Target groups

The following target groups participated in the assessment of the toolbox and certification scheme:

- Childminders
- Validation Experts
- County Childcare Development Officers
- National Experts
- Partners' staff
- Early education assistants

2.4 Data collection methods and instruments

Partners had at their disposal several feedback collection methods to choose from in order to gather the input provided by the participants to the workshops organised. In more details, all partners decided to use the method of a focus group to receive the childminders' input during their first workshop. At their second workshop, two of the partners, ECI & IPERIA, used a semi-structured questionnaire to gather quantitative feedback from the validation experts, while ISPA opted for a more qualitative approach using the methods of focus group and follow-up on-line open-ended questionnaire. The above tools have been developed in the O4-T1 methodology, provided by PROMEA, and distributed to all project partners before the organisation of the workshops.

In more details, the testing/evaluation of the VALCHILD materials by childminders took the form of a focus group on-line discussion, with participants expressing their views about the usability and comprehensiveness of the "Competence Framework". Feedback collection was facilitated through dedicated data collection forms, which moderators used to record the main conclusions drawn from the discussion with childminders. Thematically, the discussion revolved around the following areas:

a) Relevance of the competence portfolio to the childminder, i.e., reflecting interaction between the VALCHILD portfolio and childminder's skills and experience,

b) Usability of the competence portfolio by the childminder, i.e., opinions deriving from testing the VALCHILD competence portfolio,

c) Transferability of the VALCHILD competence portfolio at a European level of certification, i.e., investigating the external validity of VALCHILD tool.

Regarding the evaluation of the VALCHILD validation scheme, an on-line semi-structured questionnaire was the main instrument for capturing **validation experts'** views (during the second day/training session) on the usability and effectiveness of the VALCHILD materials.

A web-based approach was employed for reasons of practicality, and to facilitate the numerical data collection, coding, and analysis process. The semi-questionnaire was structured in a clear and simple manner to encourage participation. Given the absence of physical interaction between participants and researchers, all questions were designed as such to be clear and understandable, providing working definitions and clarifications for terms/procedures that participants may have not been familiar with.

Members of the target groups who had familiarized themselves with the VALCHILD materials, were asked to further contribute by reporting their actual insights and usage experience. Representatives' insights and feelings were recorded through a purpose-made summary form that addressed the main evaluation criteria and parameters.

The follow-up on-line open-ended questionnaire used by ISPA to validation experts combined a pre-defined frame of open questions to prompt comments for each measurement parameter. The process was short (not exceeding 10 questions), providing respondents with the opportunity to explain their views and raise issues that may have not been considered during the deployment phase. Moreover, the open-ended questionnaire was distributed to workshop's participants on-line.

In addition, ISPA used the feedback collection method of focus group in order to gather input from validation experts. The tool used for this task was the same form as the feedback form used at on-line focus groups addressed to childminders.

3. EVALUATION RESULTS

3.1 Evaluation results from childminders assessing the IO2 VALCHILD toolbox

This section presents the main findings drawn from the pilot and evaluation process, and more specifically from the qualitative analysis of the input/data provided by childminders participants through 3 on-line focus groups. The process (i.e., the pilot delivery sessions) has garnered positive comments on the relevance, usability, structure, and content of the validation scheme.

In more details, all project partners, ECI, ISPA and IPERIA, held focus groups with childminders and relevant officers who had the chance to test the VALCHILD toolbox, in order to provide their input and feedback. In total 59 individuals participated in the focus groups:

- 27 childminders
- 32 officers (organization staff, invited academics, other).

Participants had the opportunity to evaluate the toolbox in terms of relevance, usability, and transferability. The focus groups were structured similarly for all partners who addressed their participants the same questions. Their input has been analysed and presented as below:

1. **In terms of relevance**, participants were asked to provide their input according to the below questions:

    - Does the VALCHILD competence profile cover the essential skills of a childminder?

        - The majority of childminders and individuals commented that the profile demonstrates a comprehensive representation of childminders' competences. Also, they considered that the profile captures the characteristics of professionalism of a childminder.

Specifically, they value that it integrates skills related to family -the importance of childminders' contribution to a family- and involvement into local communities. However, they see no reflection of emotional wellbeing skills and business skills.

Participants mentioned that Early Childhood Education is an important aspect that should be included in the profile.

Some aspects were mentioned at national levels as the professional boundaries differ per country.

Some respondents mentioned that the business skills were missing in the profile. It seems that childminders are still considered as employee, rather than a professional offering a complete service.

- <u>Does the portfolio make it possible to identify and present all the competences of a candidate?</u>

  - Almost all of the participants recognise themselves on the portfolio, which clearly shows, according to their views "the person you are". Furthermore, participants expressed that it reflects what childminders practically are and do on a daily basis, which tasks they perform and emphasises how long the tasks' list is. It was characterized as "facilitating", "complete", "comprehensive", "with basic and achievable baselines".

  - The portfolio raises awareness of the broad spectrum competences a childminder has, and it offered a support in a reflection of their work.

- <u>What is your opinion about the VALCHILD competence profile and portfolio?</u>

  - In this case, mixed responses were collected. On one side, a number of participants acknowledges the relevance of the competence profile and portfolio at the profession of the childminder and appreciates that their profile is raising awareness about their competences. Moreover, childminders

opinionated that VALCHILD competence profile and portfolio are "a good tool for self-reflection and concise". On the other side, others commented that VALCHILD competence profile and portfolio are not addressed to professionals and more educated childminders but mainly to "nannies" who visit other houses and families and individuals who struggle with language barriers.

- Also here, the responses differ per country. France, with a VAE for childminder in place, the tools were seen relevant and in accordance with the validation, while other countries with no validation of childminder in place considered it more as a self-evaluation tool.

2. **In terms of usability**, participants commented the following:

- The competences included in the competence profile are well described and allows the candidate the opportunity to identify and match with their experiences?
    - Participants indicated that the tool is "fantastic", "clear", relevant to the sector, "follows easy structure" and that its competences are "diverse, comprehensive and address different aspects". However, they recommended that descriptors could be further broken down and developed in greater depth so as to link competences with experience. Also, childminders suggested that more examples and signposts like prints, photos, audios, and videos could have further improved their experience. Finally, they stated that language should have been clearer and simpler.

- Is the portfolio user-friendly, clear and well structured?
    - Overall, the majority of participants expressed positive comments and characterized the portfolio "catchy", "clear", "user friendly", and with "clear structure". In addition, they highlighted the fact that it enables them to become aware of what and how they could perform their tasks and which areas of competences require further development from their side. Yet, some participants suggested that it takes longer than expected to read it, provide more examples, give suggestions, revise the language and offer the support of a trainer/adviser next to the applicant. Notably, one participant said "the portfolio is basic for anyone with qualifications and too complicated for starting out".

- What aspects of the VALCHILD competence profile and/or portfolio could be improved?
    - Participants identified as areas which could be improved the following: age of children (could have been adaptable to all ages), language (could have been reviewed), aids (provision

of more examples, descriptors break down, better pictograms, validator witness practice, trainers' support), information/ procedure (clearer and more detailed).

3. **In terms of transferability**, participants were asked to provide their input to the question below:

- <u>If a "European certification for childminders based on the VALCHILD competence profile could exist one day, do you think it could be relevant or useful for European childminders (for instance, by promoting mobility, if relevant)?</u>
  - All participants agreed upon such a condition and justified their answers based upon 3 main arguments: a) recognition of childminding as equal to other professional areas, b) recognition of their occupation and valid certification among all EU countries, c) the way you raise a child is universal.

4. Participants had also the chance to provide their insights, while being able to **state their comments without restrictions**. The main comments were the following:
  - It is important for childminders to achieve recognition of their competences and professionalism in their occupation, it makes competences visible to themselves and to the other stakeholders (Parents, Quality control, Health/Childcare organisations,) and for formal registration as a childminder.
  - It is crucial for childminders to feel accepted by families, other professionals, as well as the state and law framework. In the current pandemic situation, childminders preserve their close relationship with families
  - It is anticipated that all applicants receive support during their recognition procedure and further training relevant to their occupation, as childminding lacks career progression.
  - The need of the workshop participants to share experiences and thoughts about their professions became clear - the

satisfaction of being in a circle between peers and non-peers was highly appreciated!

3.2 Evaluation results from validation experts assessing the IO3 VALCHILD certification scheme.

This section presents twofold findings drawn from the pilot and evaluation process: from the statistical descriptive analysis of the input/data provided by validation experts participants through the on-line semi-structured questionnaire (evaluation form) and from a qualitative analysis of the input/data provided by participants during the on-line focus groups held by IPERIA and ISPA and by recipients from the follow-up on-line open-ended questionnaire distributed by ISPA.

In more details:

- 22 participants completed the on-line semi-structured questionnaire disseminated by ECI and IPERIA.
- 19 participants provided their feedback in a focus group held by IPERIA.
- 8 participants provided their input during follow-up on-line open-ended questionnaire by ISPA.
- 31 participants provided their feedback in a focus group held by ISPA.

3.2.1 On-line semi-structured questionnaires' evaluation results

The process (i.e., the pilot delivery sessions) has attracted positive comments on the relevance, usability, structure, and content of the validation scheme. At the same time, participants provided valuable feedback that will be used by the partnership to improve the validation scheme and fine-tune its final version, before making it available to final end-users and beneficiaries. The results of each (survey) question are presented using tables and charts (graphs). The structure of the analysis that follows is mostly based on the structure of the evaluation form in terms of evaluation/measurement parameters and the sequence of the questions included.

The main parameters that were assessed were a) relevance, b) usability, c) structure and, d) content. The on-line semi- structured questionnaire also included – apart from demographic questions – two screening questions; one on participant's familiarisation with procedures of validation of learning, and another on the child-minding skills requirements.

In total, the online evaluation form was completed by 22 validation experts.

3.2.1.1 Demographics and familiarity.

The questionnaire commenced with the so-called screening questions, giving the chance to participants to state their country of origin and familiarity to validation of learning and child-minding skills. The results are reported below:

The survey was completed by 22 respondents. The geographical coverage of their responses is detailed as:

- France: 12
- Ireland: 10

Portugal preferred to distribute follow-up on-line open-ended questionnaires, as data collection tool from the target group of validation experts as well as performing an on-line focus group. Corresponding results are following after the numerical at section (3.2.3)

Familiarity with the process of validation of learning

Participants were asked to document their level of familiarity with the process of validation of learning. Table below shows that 82% of the total participants were extremely and moderately familiar with the process of validation of learning.
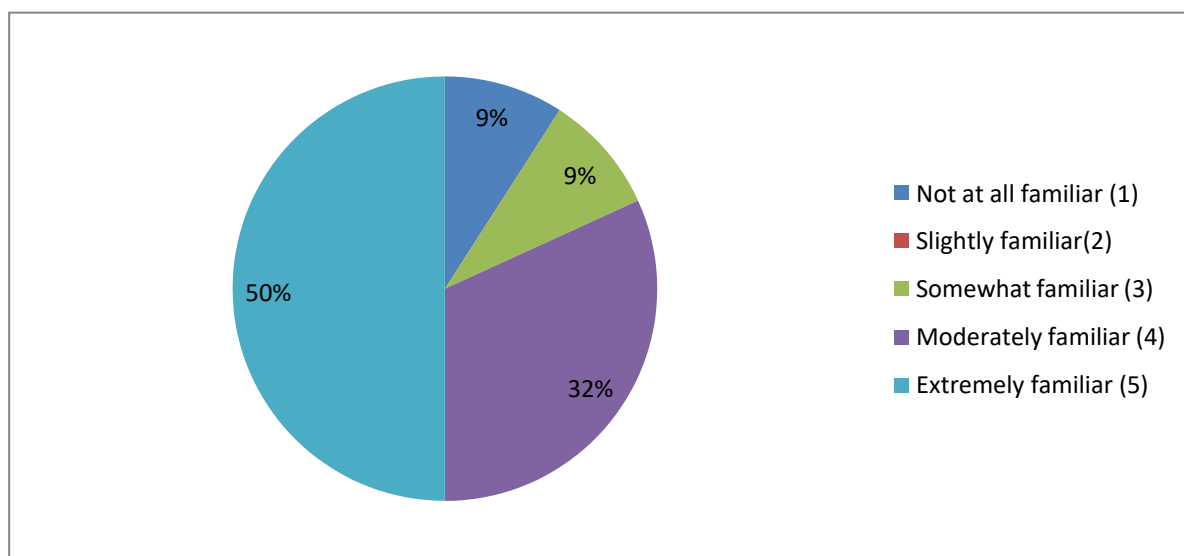
Familiarity with child-minding skills requirements

Furthermore, attendees were asked to document their level of familiarity with child-minding skills requirements. Table below shows that all participants were extremely and moderately familiar with child-minding requirements.
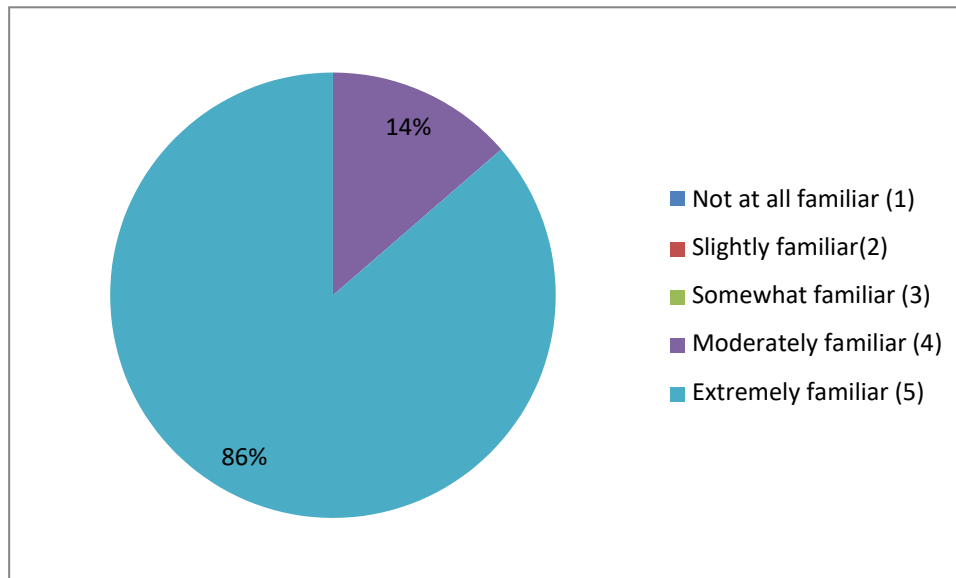
3.2.1.2 Parameter A: Relevance

The first evaluation parameter includes variables to assess the relevance and conceptual design of the testing objects. Information provided by testing participants in this area will allow the partnership to determine whether the "VALCHILD Assessment and Validation Toolbox" and the "VALCHILD Recommendations and Certification Scheme" meet real users' needs on theground. The partnership aims to review the value and effectiveness of the aforementioned outputs, in addition to competitive offerings, to assess whether the concept provides a practical solution to real challenges.

Testing participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement (1 to 5 Likert Scale) with the following (structure-related) statements:

- The VALCHILD validation scheme can be effectively used to assess and validate childminders' skills and knowledge acquired in a non-formal and informal way.

- The VALCHILD validation scheme can help obtain a reliable diagnosis on childminders' main weaknesses and strengths.

- The competence areas examined in the VALCHILD validation scheme reflect the actual skills/workplace requirements for a childminder.

- Examination tests and checklists (tools) provide valid evidence on childminders' actual skills and competences.

- The evaluation results and personalised recommendations obtained through the VALCHILD validation scheme can empower learners (childminders) to seek further learning and certification.

- The VALCHILD validation toolbox allows learners under examination to develop a skill portfolio which may act as a competence id.

Based on the evaluation results, presented in the following graphs, almost eight out of ten participants have a very positive/ positive impression.
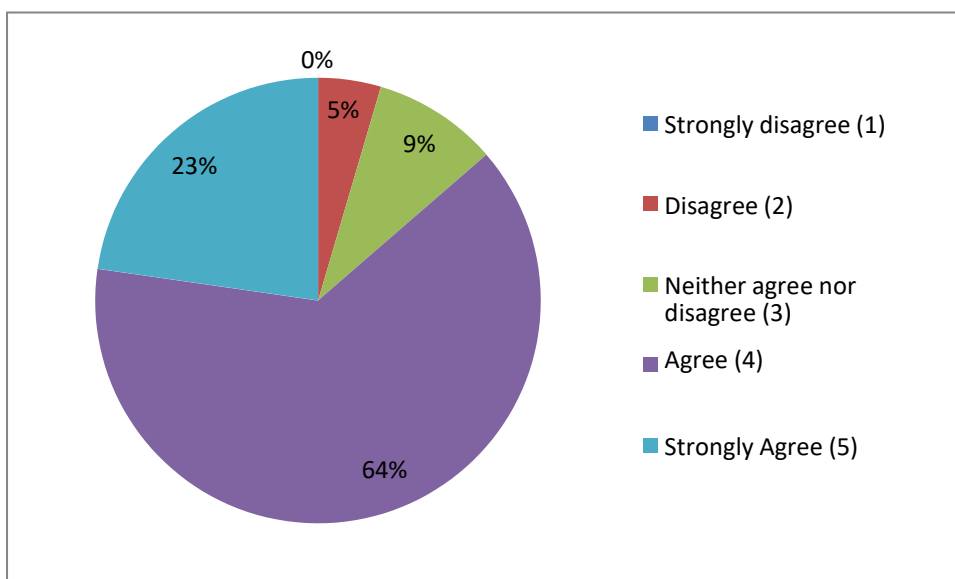
Statement 8:

The VALCHILD validation scheme can be effectively used to assess and validate childminders' skills and knowledge acquired in a non-formal and informal way**.**
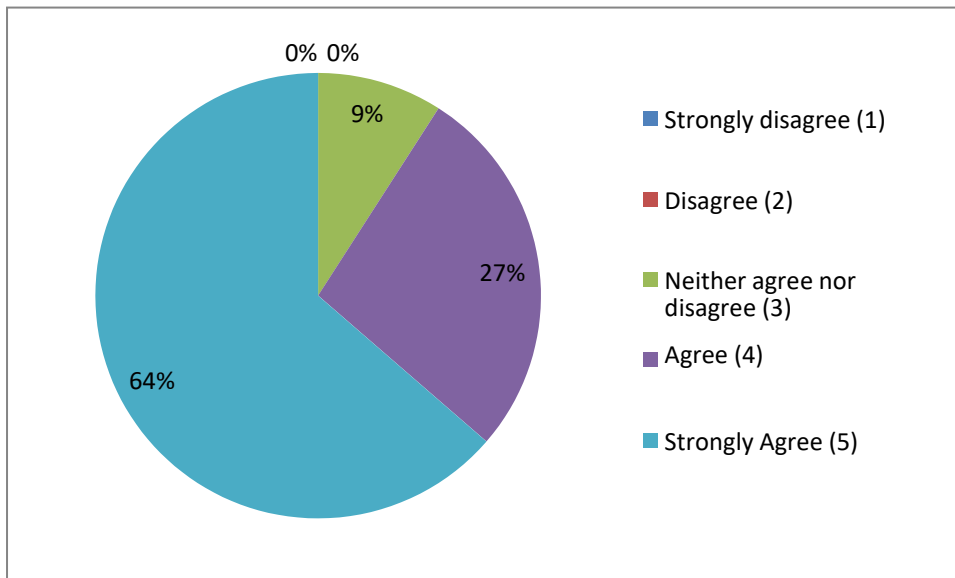
N=22

Statement 9:

The VALCHILD validation scheme can help childminders obtain a reliable diagnosis on childminders' main weaknesses and strengths.

N=22

Statement 10

The competence areas examined in the VALCHILD validation scheme reflect the actual skills/workplace requirements for a childminder.
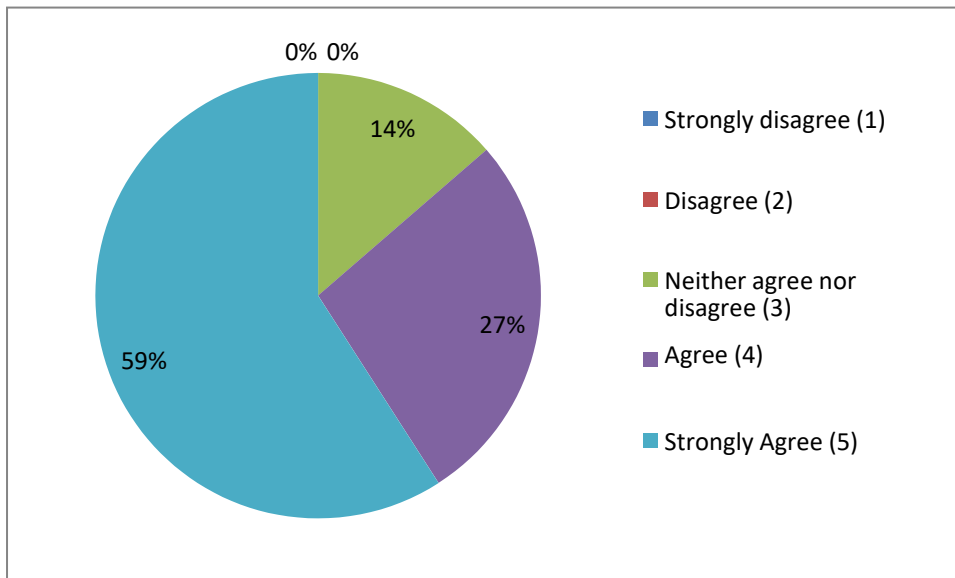
Statement 11:

Examination tests and checklists (tools) provide valid evidence on childminders' actual skills and competences.
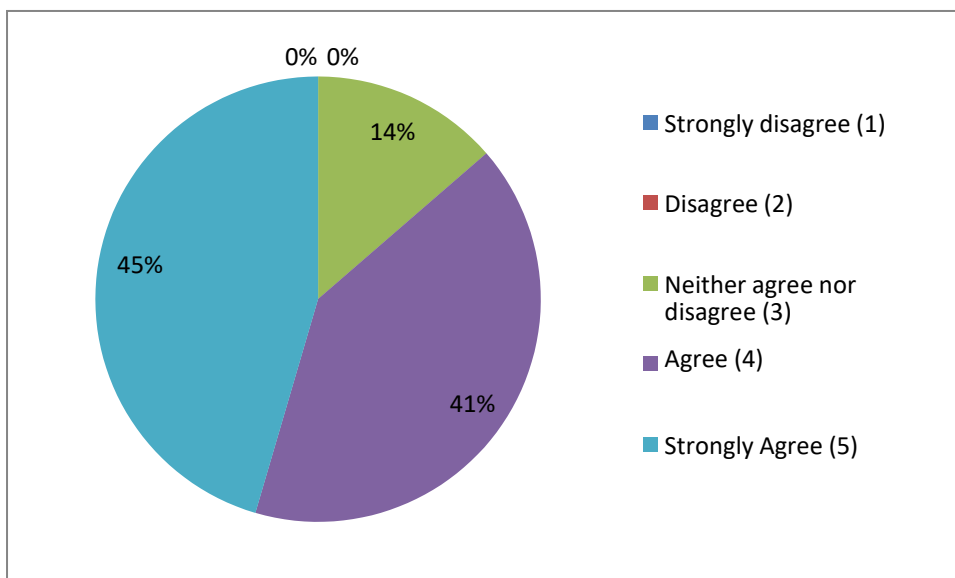
Statement 12:

The evaluation results and personalised recommendations obtained through the VALCHILD validation scheme can empower learners (childminders) to seek further learning and forms of certification.

Pie chart legend:
- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Agree (4)
- Strongly Agree (5)

Values shown: 23%, 22%, 55%
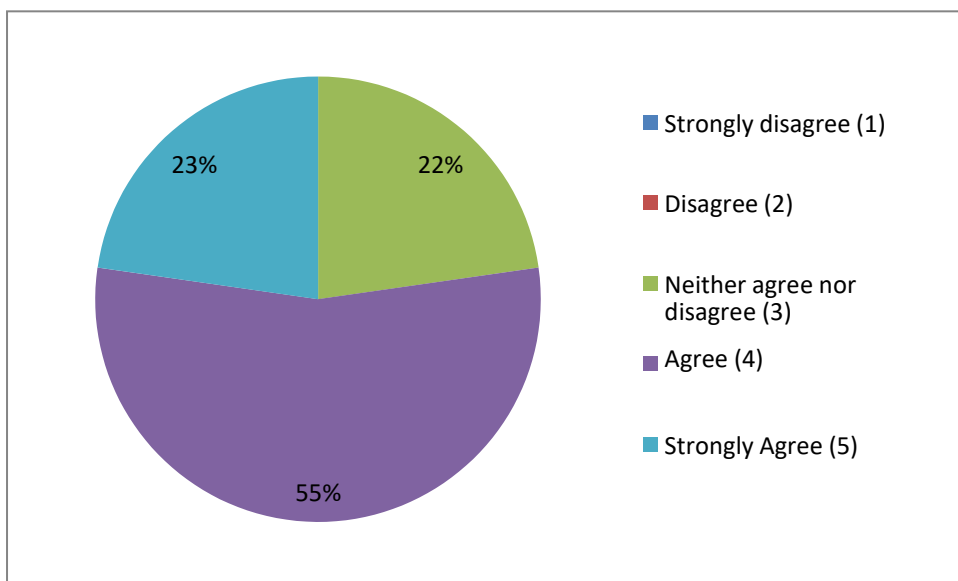
Statement 13:

The VALCHILD validation toolbox enables learners under examination to develop a skill portfolio which may act as a competence id.

Pie chart legend:
- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Agree (4)
- Strongly Agree (5)

Values shown: 10%, 45%, 45%
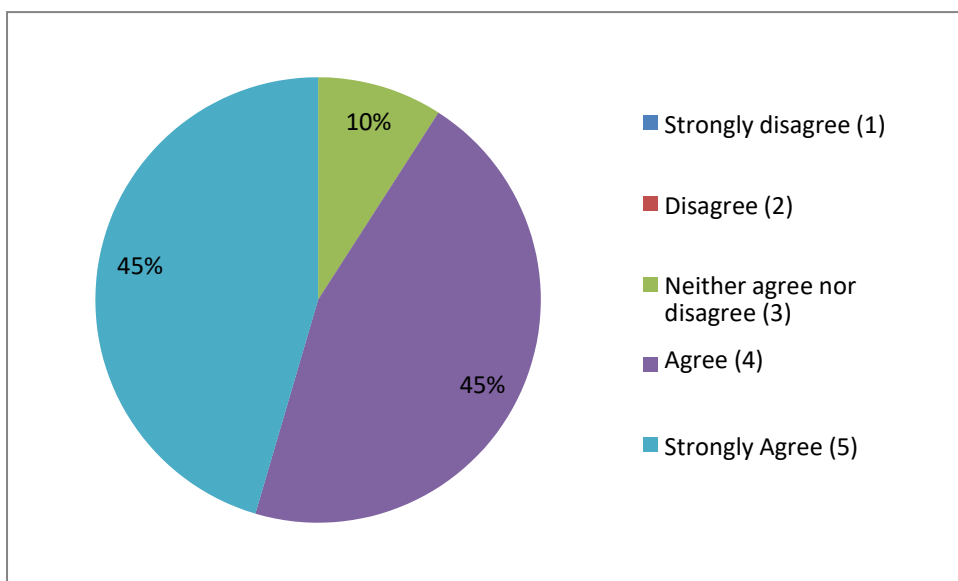
Statement 14:

The VALCHILD validation toolbox could be used as a guide for the assessment of skills of other occupational groups, such as home assistants to the elderly.

Legend:
- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Agree (4)
- Strongly Agree (5)

Pie chart values: 0%, 5%, 27%, 32%, 36%
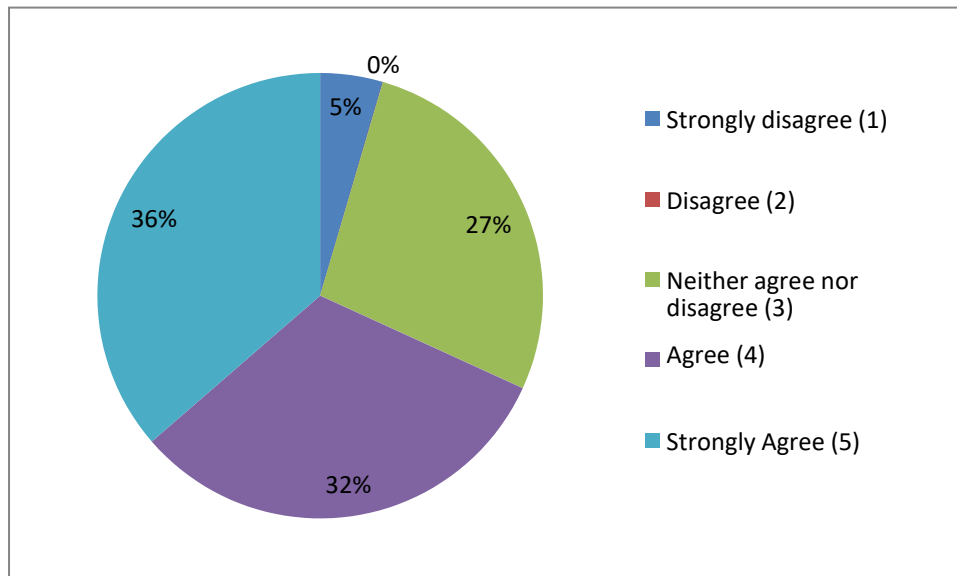
3.2.1.3   Parameter B: Usability

The second evaluation parameter includes variables that assess the usability of the VALCHILD validation scheme. Information provided by testing participants in this area will allow the partnership to assess usability, whether the VALCHILD VALIDATION scheme could be useful as a tool and/or framework at given conditions. Testing participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the following (quality-related) statements:

- The VALCHILD validation scheme sets out clear procedures and steps for the assessment and validation of childminders' prior learning.
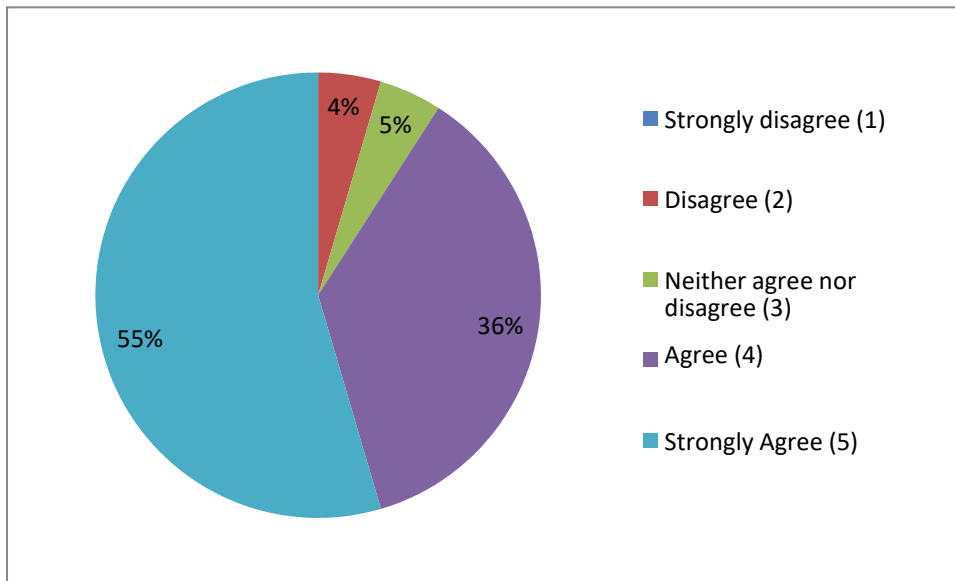
- The intended functions of the VALCHILD validation scheme are clearly presented.

- The VALCHILD validation scheme provides detailed instructions to practitioners on how to carry out the validation process and supportlearners with examination tests and the submission of their application.

- The information requested in the VALCHILD validation schemes (i.e., CV, motivation letter, acquired training can be easily provided by applicants).

- Self-diagnosis exercises and checklists can be easily completed by applicants.

- The VALCHILD validation toolbox can be easily customised by validation practitioners to include new evaluation criteria and procedures for the validation of childminders' prior learning.

What can be easily extracted from the evaluation results, as presented in the graphs below is that almost eight out of ten participants have a positive -attitude about the VALCHILD validation scheme in general.

Statement 15:

The VALCHILD validation scheme sets out clear procedures and steps for the assessment and validation of childminders' prior learning**.**

Statement 16:

The intended functions of the VALCHILD validation scheme are clearly presented.
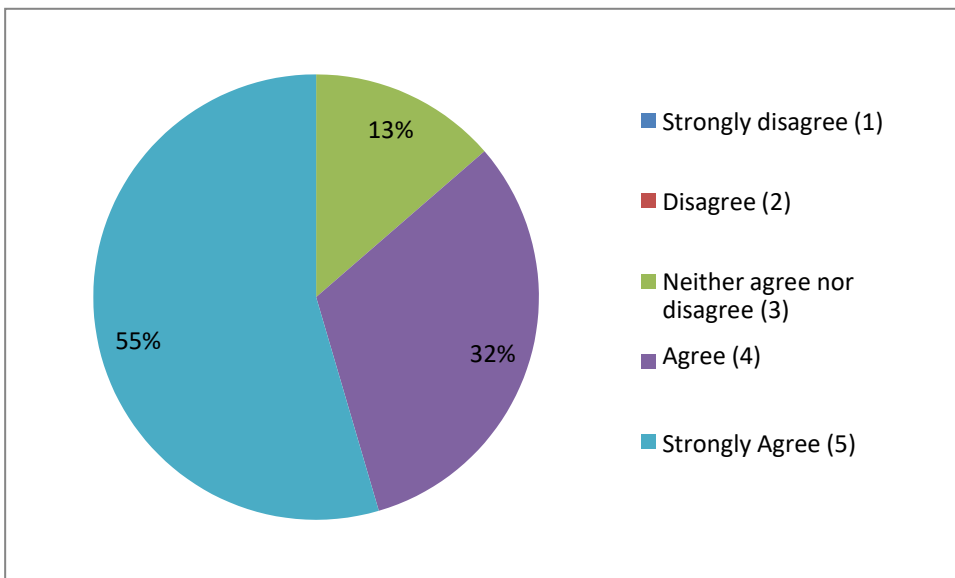
Statement 17:

The VALCHILD validation scheme provides detailed instructions to practitioners on how to carry out the validation process and support learners with examination tests and the submission of their application.

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Pie chart:
- 13% Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- 55% Agree (4)
- 32% Strongly Agree (5)

Legend:
- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Agree (4)
- Strongly Agree (5)
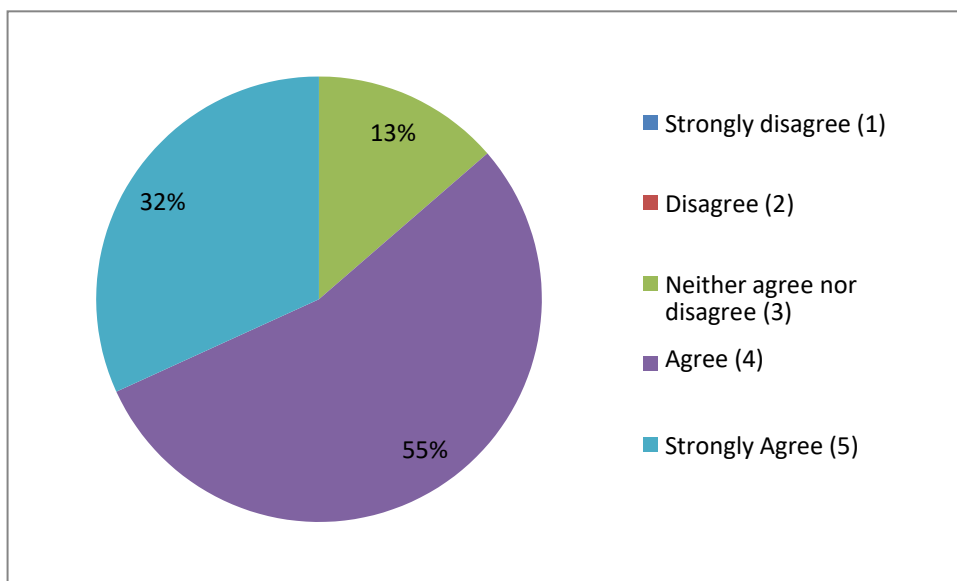
Statement 18:

The information requested in the VALCHILD validation schemes (i.e., CV, motivation letter, acquired training) can be easily provided by applicants.

Pie chart:
- 0% Strongly disagree (1)
- 5% Disagree (2)
- 23% Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- 27% Agree (4)
- 45% Strongly Agree (5)

Legend:
- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Agree (4)
- Strongly Agree (5)
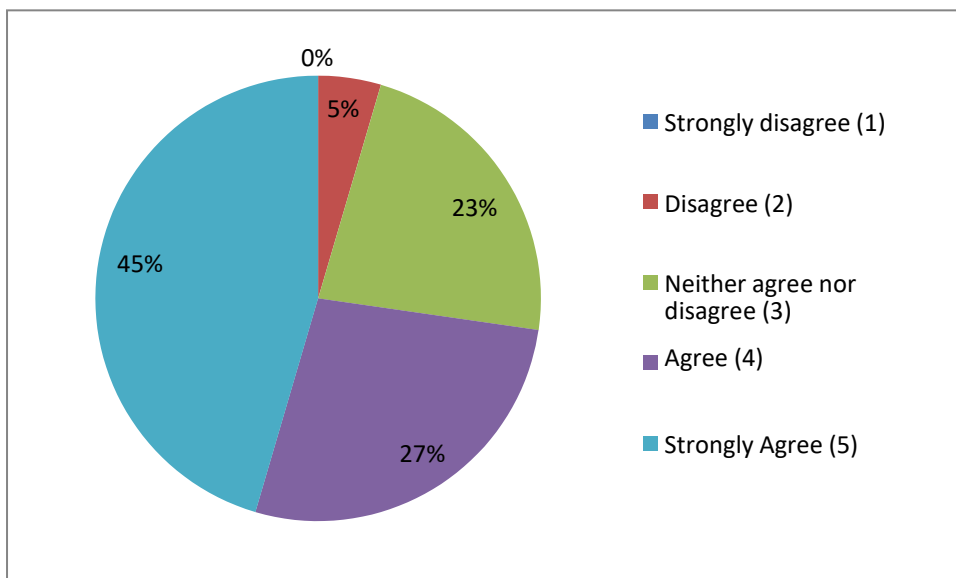
Statement 19:

Self-diagnosis exercises and checklists can be easily completed by applicants.
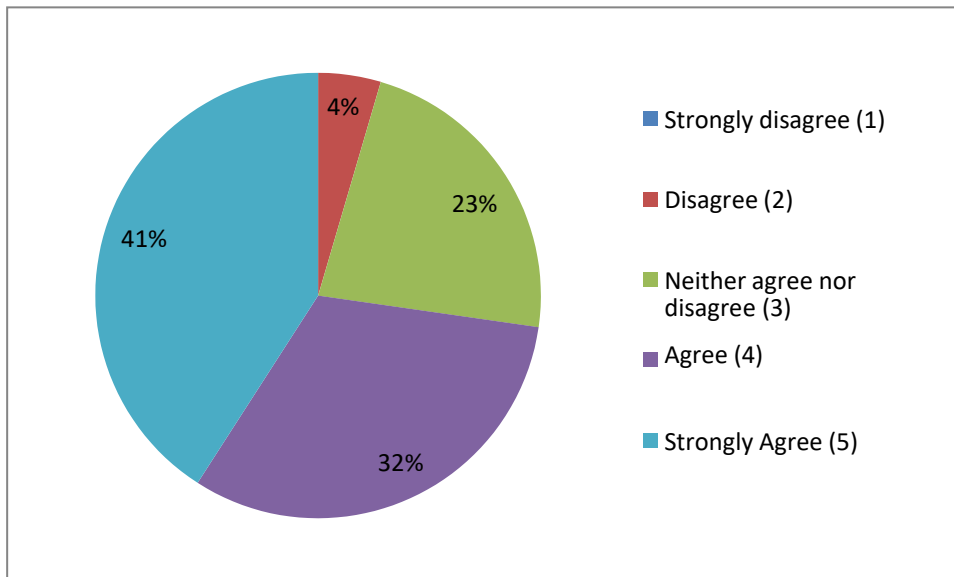
Statement 20:

The VALCHILD validation toolbox can be easily customised by validation practitioners to include new evaluation criteria and procedures for the validation of childminders' prior learning.

3.2.1.4   Parameter C: Structure and Content

The third evaluation parameter includes variables that assess the conceptual design and structure of the VALCHILD validation scheme, and identify whether validation applicants can easily comprehend the scheme's main functions, whether the structure of the content is easy to follow, and whether applicants can easily complete relevant tasks. Testing participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the following statements:
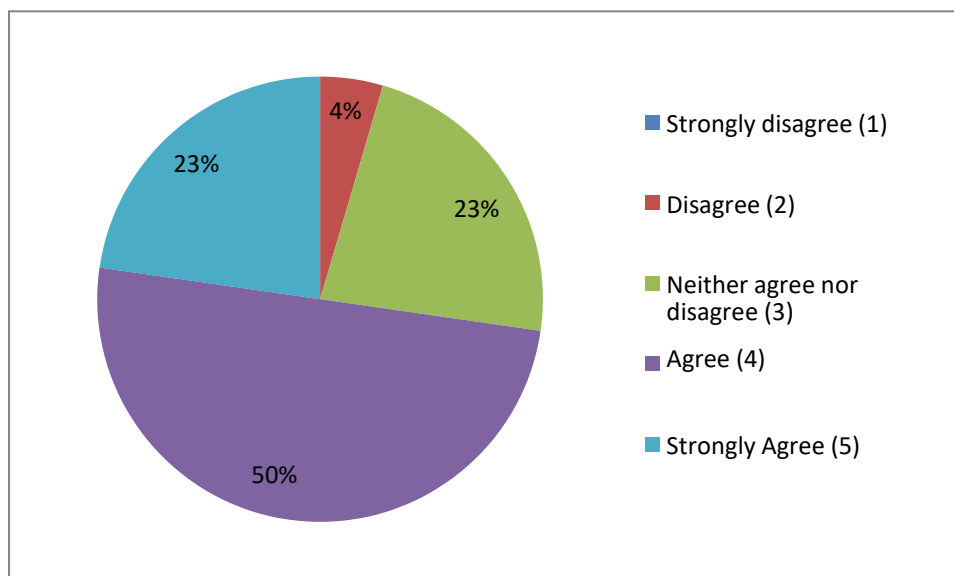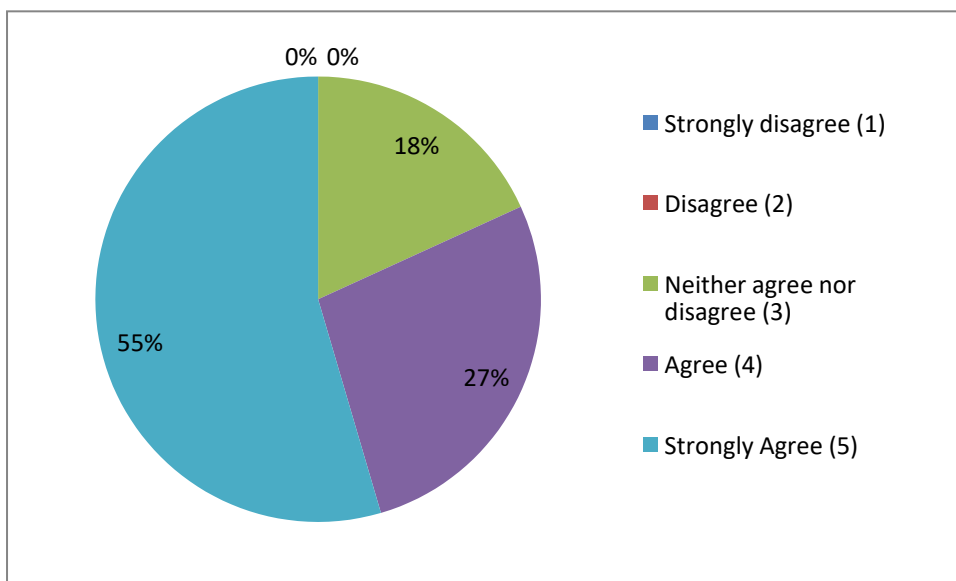
- The information/evidence requested in the VALCHILD validation schemes (i.e., CV, motivation letter, acquired training) is relevant and essential for the validation of applicants' prior learning.

- The VALCHILD validation framework sets clear evaluation criteria (competence areas) for the validation of childminders' non-formal and in-formal learning.

- Additional (skills-related) evaluation descriptors shall be included in the VALCHILD validation scheme to more precisely reflect workplace requirements.

- The VALCHILD validation framework sets clear degrees of accomplishments for each evaluation criterion (i.e., competence area)

- The Framework's three levels of validation are clearly set out and explained.

Drawing on the evaluation results, presented in the following graphs, it appears that almost eight out of ten participants have a positive attitude towards the VALCHILD validation framework.

Statement 21:

The information/evidence requested in the VALCHILD validation schemes (i.e., CV, motivation letter, acquired training) is relevant and essential for the validation of applicants' prior learning**.**

Pie chart legend:
- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Agree (4)
- Strongly Agree (5)

Values: 0%, 0%, 18%, 27%, 55%

Statement 22:

The VALCHILD validation framework sets clear evaluation criteria (competence areas) for the validation of childminders' non-formal and in-formal learning.

Pie chart legend:
- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Agree (4)
- Strongly Agree (5)

Values: 14%, 41%, 45%
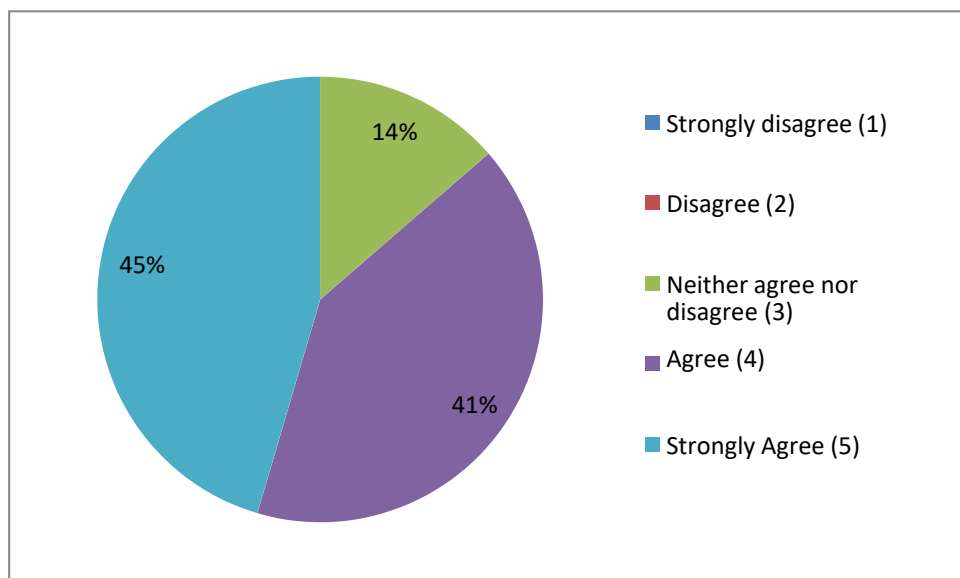
Statement 23:

Additional (skills-related) evaluation descriptors shall be included in the VALCHILD validation scheme to more precisely reflect workplace requirements.
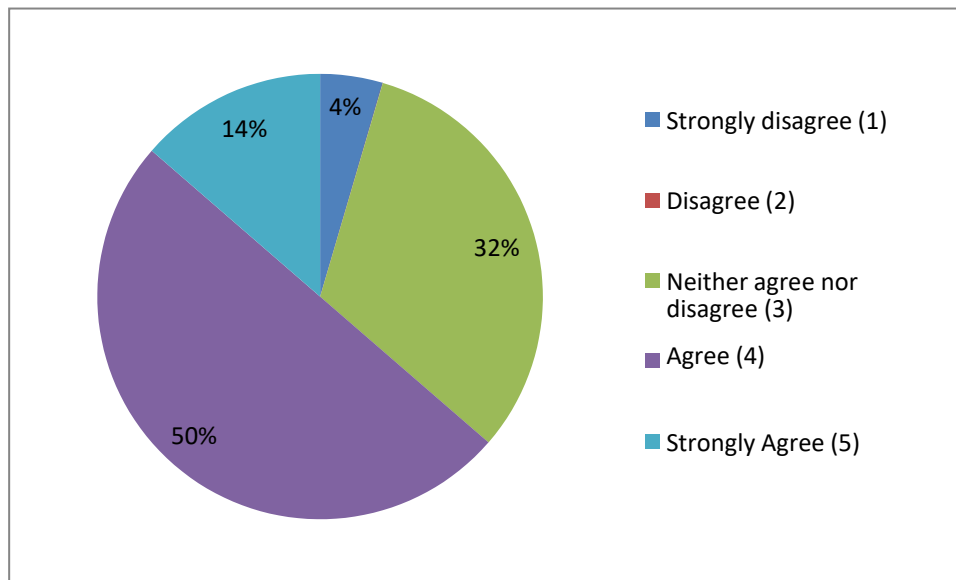
Statement 24:

The VALCHILD validation framework sets clear degrees of accomplishments for each evaluation criterion (i.e., competence area)
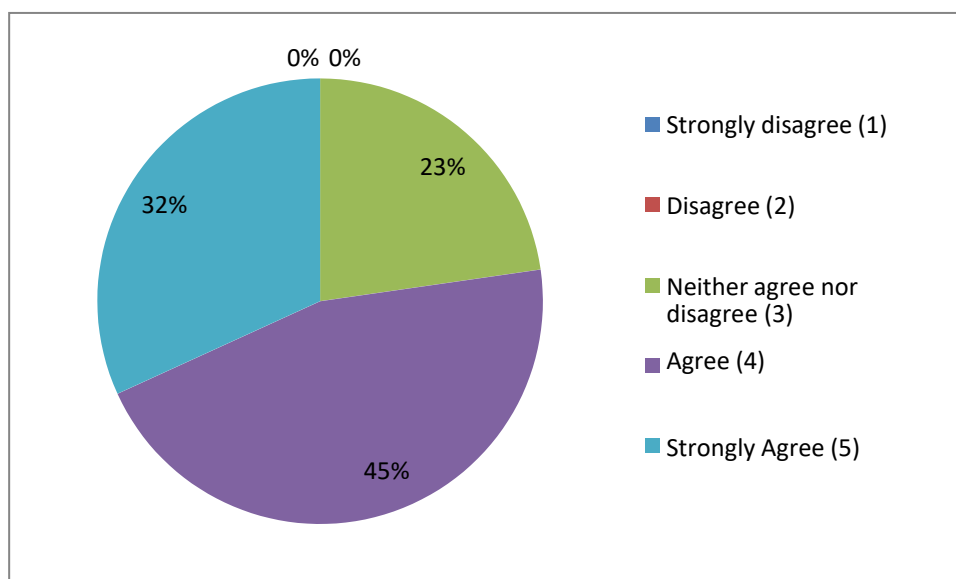
3.2.1.5 Parameter D: Suggestions for improvement (open ended question)

Testing participants were also asked about the aspects of the Validation scheme that could be further improved and were called upon giving specific examples. This section presents in detail the comments and suggestions made by testing participants. It seems that most of the participants commented about the need for increased testing of the Validation scheme within national frameworks/ policies:

- "The language used to describe roles e.g. validation practitioner"
- "It needs to fit into the national system or it will not take". [*could not be endorsed*]
- "Breakdown of competencies, need very careful consideration and linkage within Irish context"
- "The less for Childminders to do for the process the better, ensuring that there is a gain for Childminders for completing this program"
- "Language to be adapted to be more relaxed"
  "Where does it fit in with national framework qualifications"
- "The structure of the scheme is clear. It would be good to see how/where the VALCHILD validation scheme sits alongside national frameworks/policies.
  Its use will be dependent on (a) accessible, plain language; (b) positioning alongside existing frameworks and (c) clarity for childminders on the benefits of engaging with VALCHILD"
- "Ensure ongoing support and mentoring progress routes and time frames that support individual learners"
- "Explanations on questions with examples"
- "Add as annexes each country's specialties and characteristics"
- "To be adapted at each country's legislative obligations"
- "Keep integrating professionals at your projects"
- "Before implementing it in EU, adapt language practicalities"
- "Exchange opinions with experts from other countries"

3.2.1.6 Parameter E: Likelihood of future usage of VALCHILD toolbox

Lastly, testing participants were asked to indicate their level of likelihood with the following statement:

Statement 26

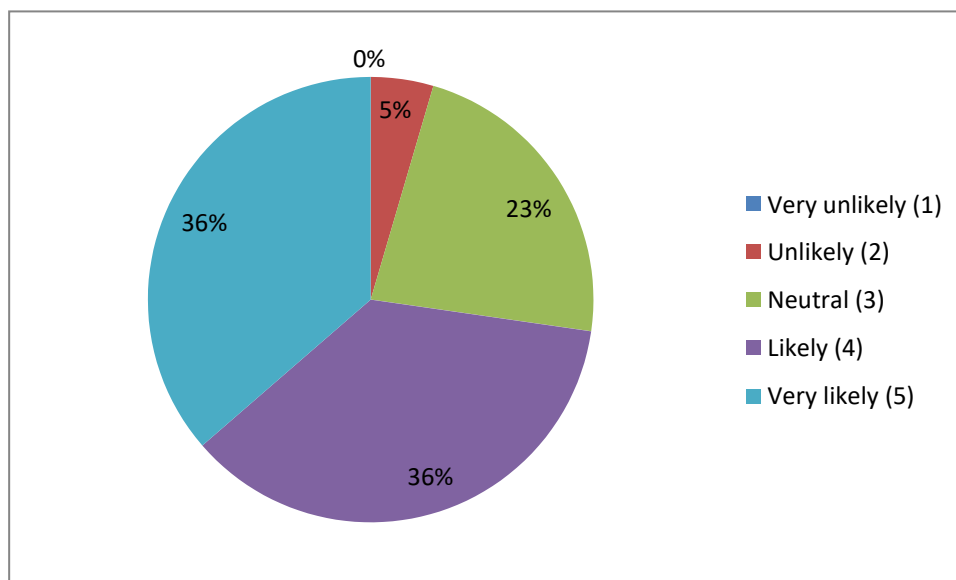How likely is it to use the VALCHILD toolbox for the validation of childminders' non-formal and informal learning?

The graph below shows the results of potential usage of VALCHILD toolbox by participants.

3.2.2 IPERIA's focus group evaluation results

IPERIA (FR) decided not only to ask focus group to complete the online semi-structured survey, but also held a focus group similar to the one organised before with childminders. The structure of the activity was the same and participants were addressed the same questions with the ones that childminders answered. A summary analysis of the feedback provided is presented below along with the discussion guide used to gather participants' input:

1. **In terms of relevance**, participants were asked to provide their input according to the below questions:
   - Does the VALCHILD competence profile cover the essential skills of a childminder?
     - The competence profile seems to all the participants comprehensive and representative of all key competences for the childminder profession. In general terms, it seems very close to the French competence profile. However, several experts pointed out some important precisions to be made (not the same "health and well-being" or "health and security"). Also, the word "support" can be tricky since the idea is to support children while they learn and do activities, not to do at their place. The remark on professional boundaries and professional secrecy for childminders was also highlighted as not relevant at least for France, considering the legal implications of it. In line with professional limits, the reference to child rights was considered "risky", since it could be too demanding for a childminder.

   - Does the portfolio make it possible to identify and present all the competences of a candidate?

     - Participants considered the portfolio to be "facilitating".

   - What is your opinion about the VALCHILD competence profile and portfolio?

- The participants considered, as the childminders did in the previous event, that both tools were relevant and in accordance with the purpose and the childminders profile.

2. **In terms of usability**, participants commented the following:

- The competences included in the competence profile are well described and allows the candidate the opportunity to identify and match with their experiences?

  - One participant pointed out that the competence profile is best suited for the occupation of "assistant to new mother" rather than "children's guardian".

- Is the portfolio user-friendly, clear and well-structured?

  - The layout and language are clear and user-friendly to all the participants. The structure is also clear since it corresponds to the competence areas and the examples are very facilitating to understand and evaluate the competences. Indeed, examples can help childminders to remind concrete situations where they implemented one or several competences, even if unaware

- What aspects of the VALCHILD competence profile and/or portfolio could be improved?

  - Pictograms were considered by some experts as facilitators, mostly for "visual" candidates who understand better images that plain text. Other experts considered they were not clear and therefore should be improved to better reflect the childminder experience.

3. **In terms of transferability**, participants were asked to provide their input to the below questions:

- If a "European certification for childminders based on the VALCHILD competence profile could exist one day, do you think it could be relevant or useful for European childminders (for instance, by

- All the participants agree as the childminders form the previous event that having a "European certification" (linked to the French one, in the French context) could be very positive for the recognition of childminders as real professionals not only at national level but also at EU level. Also, they agreed that such a "certification" could be very useful for professional mobility, as it can be also the case for a second language (for families coming from abroad and having a different mother tongue).

In general terms, the input received from the focus group was very positive. Participants thought that the portfolio is facilitating and relevant to its scope. Additionally, participants commented on pictograms as accommodating of childminders' interest in visual aids, and some considered inadequate and in need for further improvement. Finally, all validation experts discussed that the idea of a European certification would be beneficial for the recognition of childminders as real professionals at EU level.

3.2.3 ISPA's follow-up on-line open-ended questionnaires' results

ISPA opted for distributing follow-up on-line open-ended questionnaires to validation experts, who participated in their focus group instead of handling them the online semi-structured questionnaire. In total, 8 follow-up interviews were conducted and the feedback received along with the questions posed is presented below:

1. Reflecting on the VALCHILD materials presented at the meeting of 28 January 2021, do you consider that they satisfactorily meet the current needs for self-assessment and validation of non-formal and informal competencies of Childminders? (Do they help to obtain a reliable diagnosis of the strengths and weaknesses of their pathway? Can the tools provide evidence about Childminders' effective competencies?). Please illustrate

    - Unanimity in considering that the materials allow for self-assessment and validation of competencies. Participants highlighted the diversity of evidence that the portfolio allows them to illustrate, not only for self-assessment, to highlight competencies, but also to identify possible training needs. Although it is essentially based on self-analysis, this should be supported by teamwork

2. <u>Do you consider that "Competence Profile" is comprehensive and reflects the actual competences/requirements for the work of a Childminder? (a. Does it reflect the job profile of a Childminder? b. Does it consider the evolution of competence requirements for Childminders in recent years? c. Does it point out Competence descriptors? D. Do the indicators for each domain enable your assessment?). Please explain.</u>

- Appropriate, comprehensive, and clear profile. However, some suggestions are made:
  - Include topic about the care of children with SEN
  - Focus on unstructured materials and valuing outdoor play in natural contexts
  - Focus on the health, well-being, and self-care of the Childminder.
  - Focus on active listening to the child.

3. <u>Do you think the procedure set out for the assessment and validation of childminders' prior learning is straightforward and easy to follow? (a. Admission steps? b. Elements necessary to prepare the admission folder? c. Necessary documentation requested?</u>

- Clear and adapted procedures and stages, both for those starting the process and for the continuous training of those in practice. The need to be accompanied by a technician not only in the process but also in the confirmation and validation of the competencies indicated is highlighted. It is suggested the creation of a general, simplified brochure, with diagrams presenting the whole process, pertinent information, doubts and frequently asked questions.

4. <u>Is the VALCHILD validation scheme capable of empowering learners (childminders) to seek further learning and some sort of certification?</u>

- It was unanimous that the process can enhance further training. However, it was highlighted that in Portugal training is mandatory, as it is considered essential that the validation and certification process is accompanied by some training. The role of technicians and peers is

also important in identifying the training needed.

5. <u>Do you think the VALCHILD assessment and validation scheme can help informal childminders secure the visibility of their knowledge and skills, and thus increase their employability?</u>

  - It was again unanimous that this process allows competencies to become visible, as it enables childminders to become aware of them. Again, the need for parallel training was highlighted, and for this not to happen it is necessary to change the legislation.

6. <u>Would you use the VALCHILD assessment and validation scheme, as partof your validation processed for childminders or other thematically relevant occupational categories?</u>

  - Experts would use this process not only for the initial competence validation, but also for the monitoring of active childminders.

3.2.4 ISPA's focus group's results

ISPA (PT) decided to carry out as an additional feedback method from validation experts, an on-line focus group similar to the one organised before with childminders. The structure of the activity was the same and participants were addressed the same questions with the ones that childminders answered. A summary analysis of the feedback provided is presented below along with the discussion guide used to gather participants' input:

1. **In terms of relevance**, participants were asked to provide their input according to the below questions:

  - <u>Does the VALCHILD competence profile cover the essential skills of a childminder?</u>
    - Yes, although others linked to the self-care of childminders with a view to their well-being may be considered. Aspects related to the management of the child's emotions are also important

  - <u>Does the portfolio make it possible to identify and present all the</u>

competences of a candidate?

- Overall participants agreed that it does, however they stressed that identification process would opted if supported in a group structure. Meaning that the VPL process would be enriched if a support network is available. There is, thus, group empowerment.

- What is your opinion about the VALCHILD competence profile and portfolio?

    - The VALCHILD competence profile and portfolio gave a positive impression, but some concerns were raised:
    Who can be the Tutor in this process? Which are the competences of this tutor? How can people be encouraged to enter these validation and certification processes if illegal activity is often felt to bring more benefits (i.e., accepting more children than the legislation allows and receive better payment?)

2. **In terms of usability**, participants commented the following:

- The competences included in the competence profile are well described and allows the candidate the opportunity to identify and match with their experiences?

    - Indeed, participants confirmed that the competence profile not only enables a comprehensive process of validation, but it also a tool for personal appreciation.

- Is the portfolio user-friendly, clear and well-structured?

    - Participants agreed that the portfolio is friendly, clear and well-structured. In addition, they stated that it makes visible the childminders' skills, social competences in order to support him/her into practice.

- What aspects of the VALCHILD competence profile and/or portfolio could be improved?

- Participants mentioned that the following aspects could be included: self-care and well-being of the childminders managing emotions in the child; knowledge of resources and strategies for children with Special Educational Needs.

3. **In terms of transferability**, participants were asked to provide their input to the below questions:

- <u>If a "European certification for childminders based on the VALCHILD competence profile could exist one day, do you think it could be relevant or useful for European childminders (for instance, by promoting mobility, if relevant)?</u>

    - It was commonly agreed that if a VALCHILD competence profile existed, it could be useful and relevant for European childminders. Moreover, they proposed that the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and position paper could influence Portuguese Policy makers, advocating for complementary validation of non-formal e informal competences alongside with compulsory.

4. CONCLUSIONS DRAWN FROM THE ASSESMENT PROCEDURE

The consortium carried out workshops with both childminders and validation experts. In order to gather their input partners chose different methods such as focus groups, follow-up on-line open-ended questionnaires and on-line semi-structured questionnaires. The main conclusions emerging from the above mentioned activities are presented below in two different sections for each category: Childminders assessing the VALCHILD toolbox and validation experts assessing the VALCHILD certification scheme.

4.1 Conclusions drawn from the assessment of IO2 toolbox by childminders

VACHILD partners managed to organise workshops with childminders from their countries (IE, FR, and PT) and decided to secure their feedback using the method of a focus group.

In general terms, all partners recorded positive comments on the relevance, usability, structure and content of the validation scheme. Participants commented that the profile demonstrates good recognition of childminders' competences while most of the participants were able to recognise themselves in the portfolio.

Moreover, the tool was characterised as fantastic and relevant to the sector, while most of the participants expressed positive comments and characterisedthe portfolio as catchy and clear. Regarding the idea of a "European certification for childminders based on the VALCHILD competence profile" participants agreed upon such a condition while justifying their views upon 3 main arguments: a) recognition of childminding as equal to other professional areas, b) recognition of their occupation and valid certification among all EU countries, c) the way you raise a child is universal.

Finally, it was understood that participants anticipated that applicants should receive support during their recognition procedure and further training relevant to their occupation because childminding lacks in the field of career progression or work in groups, supporting each other.

4.2 Conclusions drawn from the assessment of IO3 certification scheme by validation experts

At this point, partners opted for using mixed methods to gather the input provided the input provided by validation experts. As mentioned before:

- **IPERIA** collected the feedback provided by validation experts assessing the validation scheme during the second workshop using a **semi**-**structured on-line questionnaire** and a **focus group**.
- **ECI** collected the feedback provided by validation experts assessing the validation scheme during the second workshop using a **semi**-**structured on-line questionnaire.**
- **ISPA** collected the feedback provided by validation experts assessing the validation scheme during the second workshop using **follow-up on-line open-ended questionnaires** and by carrying out a **focus group.**

In general terms, experts were in favour of the certification scheme expressing their viewpoints about the relevance of the tool, its usability as well as its structure

and well-presented content.

Moreover, they found the portfolio facilitating and relevant to its scope and praised the role of pictograms in facilitating the needs of childminders who prefervisual aids. Most of the participants stated that they would use the VALCHILD tools believing that this would increase childminders' employability rates. Additionally, validation experts elaborated positively on the idea of a European certification thinking that it would be beneficial for the recognition of childminders as real professionals at an EU level.

Finally, there were also some comments and concerns regarding the tools' reliability, and the adequacy of complementary documents to the application while participants were kind enough to provide some additional suggestions on enhancing the reliability and credibility of applicant's documentation and evaluation criteria for applicant's personality assessment.

5. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER IMPROVEMENT

The main objective of the VALCHILD tools' extended assessment was to test the whole set of the consortium's produced results by sector experts and relevant employees. The reason of this evaluation is to assess the VALCHILD toolbox and certification scheme functionality because these results will be embedded to the O4-T3 Policy Paper to be further disseminated.

The key findings and suggestions made by **childminders who assessed the VALCHILD toolbox** could be summarized as follows:

- Key findings:
  - ➢ In terms of **relevance**: The VALCHILD toolbox and certification scheme demonstrates a comprehensive representation of childminders' competences, displays the professional perspective of the occupation, acknowledges personal relevance, raises awareness of a broader spectrum of childminders' competences, constitutes a good tool for self-reflection.
  - ➢ In terms of **usability**: The VALCHILD toolbox and certification scheme was characterized "fantastic", "clear", "easy to follow", "with clear structure". Moreover, it enables childminders to become aware of what they know and which areas to improve.
  - ➢ In terms of **transferability**: All of participants agreed upon the idea that the VALCHILD toolbox and certification, if existed, scheme could be relevant and useful for European childminders.

- Suggestions:
  - ➢ Participants mentioned that the language should be clearer and simpler because it takes longer than expected to read it and asked the consortium to provide more examples and give suggestions.
  - ➢ Additionally some others mentioned that descriptors could be further broken down and developed more in depth in order to link competences with experience.
  - ➢ A provocative idea was that this tool could be adaptable to all ages; however this could take place in another project similar to VALCHILD.
  - ➢ Information and procedure regarding additional information provided at O3's Handbook should be clearer and more detailed.

- All applicants agreed on what is already mentioned in project's output O2 that participants should receive support during their recognition procedure and further training, as also mentioned in VALCHILD's certification scheme, relevant to their occupation as childminding lacks career progression.

- Use the self-evaluation form for self-reflection, improvement of their work and self-management of further learning, training and education.

The key findings and suggestions made by **validation experts who assessed the VALCHILD certification scheme** could be summarised as follows:

- Key findings:
    - Some participants expressed doubts on several issues, mentioning that the VALCHILD tools lack evaluation criteria for applicants' personality assessment. Additionally, they referred to the need for guidance when the application is not accepted and finally people mentioned that the tools lack financial information for further educational training and available resources as well as language evaluations.
    - Some experts thought that support is necessary during the application procedure. Not only during the use of the toolbox but also during the certification procedure.
    - There were concerns on the reliability, the adequacy of complementary documents to the application and applicants' personal characteristics and experiences.
    - There is a need to make sure that the scheme will fit into the national system otherwise it might not take, meaning that it won't be endorsed & accepted by relevant stakeholders.

- Suggestions:
    - Experts had the opportunity to develop some suggestions regarding the further development of the project. In more details, some participants suggested that the following aspects could complement the existing competence descriptors: childminding children in special needs, training children to become good listeners and self-reliant.
    - The provision of explanations on questions with examples was also

proposed.

> Adding as annexes each country's specialties and characteristics was another suggestion.

> Finally, it was also proposed that the scheme could be adapted at each country's legislative obligations.

The assessment's findings, as shown in more detail in Chapter 3, confirmed the usability of the VALCHILD tools, verifying that both childminders and validation experts find the results useful for the improvement of the sector while overall, very positive feedback was received from the participants. It is also, of great importance to state that all participants declared themselves willing to take the project's tools and certify themselves while finally the results provide us with a valuable insight of the participants' evaluation and opinion on the tools.

6. ANNEXES

Annex A: Feedback form for focus groups

FOCUS GROUP DETAILS

Partner Organisation		
Location		
Moderator (1)	Name:	Position:
Moderator (2)	Name:	Position:
No. of participants		
Date		
Duration		
Delivery Mode	☐ On-site ☐ Virtually ☐ Other (please specify)	
Language		

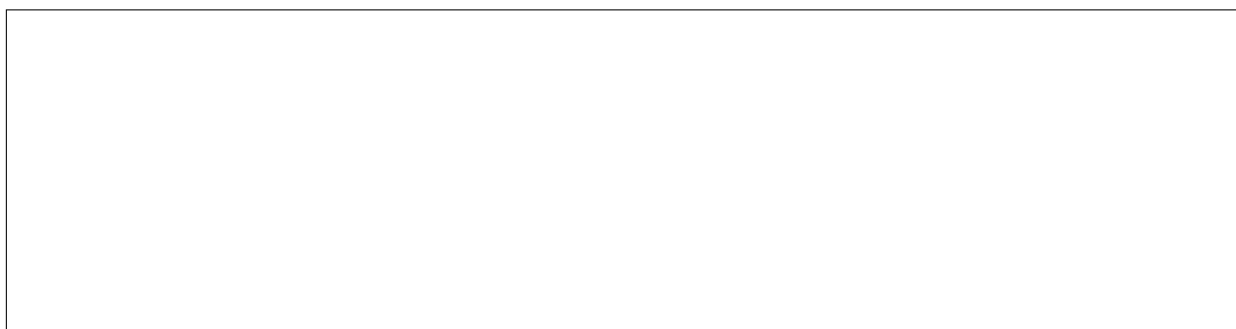DISCUSSION MAIN POINTS AND CONCLUSIONS

1. RELEVANCE	
1.1 Does the VALCHILD competence profile cover the essential skills of a childminder?	
1.2. Does the portfolio make it possible to identify and present all the competences of a candidate?	

1.3. What is your opinion about the VALCHILD competence profile and portfolio?	
2. USABILITY	
2.1. The competences included in the competence profile are well described and allows the candidate the opportunity to identify and match with their experiences?	
2.2. Is the portfolio user-friendly, clear and well structured?	
2.3. What aspects of the VALCHILD competence profile and/or portfolio could be improved?	
3. TRANSFERABILITY	
3.1. If a "European certification" for childminders based on the VALCHILD competence profile could exist one day, do you think it could be relevant or useful for European childminders (for instance, by promoting mobility, if relevant)?	
4. OTHER COMMENTS	

Annex B: On-line Semi-structured Questionnaire for validation experts

A. RESPONDENT PROFILE AND FAMILIARITY

1. Name (*optional)

2. Email (*optional)

3. Country of residence

4. Which of the following best describes you?

- o Validation practitioner (e.g., certification body)
- o Childminder
- o Employer
- o Trainer
- o Field expert
- o Other (please specify)

5. Organisation

6. How familiar are you with processes related to the validation of learning?

- o Extremely familiar
- o Moderately familiar
- o Somewhat familiar
- o Slightly familiar
- o Not at all familiar

7. How familiar are you with child-minding and relevant skills requirements?

- o Extremely familiar
- o Moderately familiar
- o Somewhat familiar
- o Slightly familiar
- o Not at all familiar

RELEVANCE

When thinking of your introduction with the VALCHILD validation scheme, how much do you agree/disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
8. The VALCHILD validation scheme can be effectively used to assess and validate childminders' skills and knowledge acquired in a non-formal and informal way.					
9. The VALCHILD validation scheme can help obtain a reliable diagnosis on childminders' main weaknesses and strengths.					

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
10. The competence areas examined in the VALCHILD validation scheme reflect the actual skills/workplace requirements for a childminder.					
11. Examination tests and checklists (tools) provide valid evidence on childminders' actual skills and competences.					
12. The evaluation results and personalised recommendations obtained through the VALCHILD validation scheme can empower learners (childminders) to seek further learning and some sort of certification.					
13. The VALCHILD validation toolbox enable learners under examination in developing their own skill portfolio to act as a competence id.					

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
14. The VALCHILD validation toolbox could be used as a guide for the assessment of skills of other occupational groups, such as home assistants to the elderly.					

USABILITY

When thinking of your introduction with the VALCHILD validation scheme, how much do you agree/disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
15. The VALCHILD validation scheme sets out clear procedures and steps for the assessment and validation of childminders' prior learning.					
16. The intended functions of the VALCHILD validation scheme are clearly presented.					

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
17. The VALCHILD validation scheme provides detailed instructions to practitioners on how to carry out the validation process and support learners with examination tests and the submission of their application.					
18. The information requested in the VALCHILD validation schemes (i.e., CV, motivation letter, acquired training can be easily provided by applicants.					
19. Self-diagnosis exercises and checklists can be easily completed by applicants.					
20. The VALCHILD validation toolbox can be easily customised by validation practitioners to include new evaluation criteria and procedures for the validation of childminders' prior learning.					

STRUCTURE AND CONTENT

When thinking of your introduction with the VALCHILD validation scheme, how much do you agree/disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
21. The information/evidence requested in the VALCHILD validation schemes (i.e., CV, motivation letter, acquired training) is relevant and essential for the validation of applicants' prior learning.					
22. The VALCHILD validation framework sets clear evaluation criteria (competence areas) for the validation of childminders' non-formal and in-formal learning.					
23. Additional (skills-related) evaluation descriptors shall be included in the VALCHILD validation scheme to more precisely reflect workplace requirements.					
24. The VALCHILD validation framework sets clear degrees of accomplishments for each evaluation criterion (i.e., competence area)					
25. The Framework's three levels of validation are clearly					

set out and explained.					

26. What aspects of the VALCHILD validation scheme could be improved?

27. How likely is it to use the VALCHILD toolbox for the validation of childminders' non-formal and informal learning?

- o Very likely
- o Likely
- o Neutral
- o Unlikely
- o Very unlikely

Annex C: Follow-up on-line open-ended questionnaire

Questions

1. Reflecting on the VALCHILD materials presented at the workshop, do you consider that they satisfactorily meet the current needs for self-assessment and validation of non-formal and informal competencies of Childminders? (Do they help to obtain a reliable diagnosis of the strengths and weaknesses of their pathway? Can the tools provide evidence about Childminders' effective competencies?). Please illustrate.

2. Do you consider that "Competence Profile" is comprehensive and reflects the actual competences/requirements for the work of a Childminder? (a. Does it reflect the job profile of a Childminder? b. Does it consider the evolution of competence requirements for Childminders in recent years? c. Does it point out Competence descriptors? D. Do the indicators for each domain enable your assessment?). Please explain.

3. Do you think the procedure set out for the assessment and validation of childminders' prior learning is straightforward and easy to follow? (a. Admission steps? b. Elements necessary to prepare the admission folder? c. Necessary documentation requested?

4. Is the VALCHILD validation scheme capable to empower learners (childminders) to seek further learning and some sort of certification?

5. Do you think the VALCHILD assessment and validation scheme can help informal childminders secure the visibility of their knowledge and skills, and thus increase their employability?

6. Would you use the VALCHILD assessment and validation scheme, as part of your validation processed for childminders or other thematically relevant occupational categories?

7. Would you use the VALCHILD assessment and validation scheme, as part of your validation processed for childminders or other thematically relevant occupational categories?

Annex D: Checklist for session moderators

TESTING SESSION DETAILS		
Partner Organisation		
Moderator (1)	Name:	Position:
Moderator (2)	Name:	Position:
No. of participants		
Date		
Location		
Duration		
Delivery Mode	☐ On-site ☐ Virtually ☐ Other (please specify)	
Equipment used		
Language		
Type of recording	☐ Audio ☐ Video ☐ No recording	

BEFORE TESTING (checklist)	
The scope and objectives of the VALCHILD project were clearly presented.	☐
Testing participants were informed about the scope and purpose of testing.	☐
The workshop agenda and testing procedure were presented.	☐
The VALCHILD Assessment and Validation Toolbox (O2) was presented in detail.	☐
The VALCHILD Certification Scheme (O3) was presented in detail.	☐
Detailed instructions and clarifications were provided to testing participants.	☐
All the necessary forms/documentation were provided to testing participants.	☐
Confidentiality and adherence to GDPR provisions were explained.	☐
Testing participants provided consent for the procedure to be recorded.	☐

AFTER TESTING (checklist)	
Participants' comments and questions were documented.	☐
Participants filled in the evaluation questionnaire.	☐
Participants were asked if they are available to participate in follow-up interviews	☐
The contact details, of those willing to participate in follow-up interviews, were gathered.	☐