



IO2 REPORT | UNITS

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1. INTRODUCTION AND OUTPUT OBJECTIVES

Setting out the profile of the AD professional (Orero 2005a, 2007) delineating his/her skills is the backbone to the project, acting as a logical extension of IO1 as well as a key for the definition of the course content (IO3) – and, in a long-term perspective, of the training material (IO4). Although AD is being produced – unevenly – in several countries (ADLAB 2012), outside inner, professional circles, little is known about who audio describers are, and there is no clear knowledge on whether and how they received training and how training is organized. The latter issues have been tackled systematically for the first time in IO1 (ADLAB PRO 2017; Chmiel and Mazur 2017). However, until now, **there has been very little debate about the appropriate skills** (i.e. abilities that an individual has to acquire through training and experience) **needed by professionals looking to work in this area**. Such issues are crucial given the (social, but also linguistic) impact that AD texts can have on end-users and given the current need for high quality descriptions across various categories of audiovisual texts (cinema, TV, live events, museums and art galleries, etc.).

The primary objective of IO2 is therefore to **pinpoint the necessary skills** needed to train professional audio describers, in order to later outline the profile of the AD professional and offer an AD training toolkit or a “template” (the **Matrix**). This will be based on the perspective of professionals (audio describers and professionals), and integrated with the perspective of end-users, which will be collected thanks to a questionnaire. The Matrix will **serve as a starting point** for the design of a specialized course (IO3) and the following creation of training materials (IO4). The Matrix will be created based on an “**index of importance**” that will be created purposefully and attributed to all skills dealt with in the questionnaire. Decisions on the importance of particular sets of AD skills to be included in the course design will be taken as part of the IO3 activity based on their relevance determined by the index of importance as well as based on the theoretical framework that will be developed.

A secondary objective of IO2 is to gain a better picture of the **sociological reality** audio describers live in. In particular, we are interested in gaining knowledge on their status and their working experience, language proficiency, interaction with other colleagues in the field, and in the recruitment policy in the audio description milieu. We also aim to get a comprehensive picture of the context in which audio describers live in terms of mutual relationships and working trends. All these factors have never been researched before in the AD field (but see Pavesi and Perego 2007, 2008 and Perego and Pavesi 2006 on the sociological profiling of film translators in Italy as a methodological reference). However, they can have a major effect on the ultimate skills that need to be focused on in training settings, and they can have an impact, in the long-term, on the creation of AD language norms. An entire section of this Report will therefore be devoted specifically to these issues.

Overall, the aim of this Report is to offer the reader most of the results obtained from the survey. A finer analysis will be carried out in the future and it will be offered through academic articles deriving from the report itself. Offering most of the data to the reader means they can focus on the aspects they are more interested in, and to be able to select the data according to their needs.

2. METHOD

All IO2 activities revolved around the construction, distribution and analysis of a questionnaire, which was the privileged tool for gathering the information relevant to the objectives of this IO. The questionnaire was meant primarily for **distribution in all project partner countries**, although reaching out beyond these countries is a welcome result.

In the first stage, **AD and accessibility literature** (Arma 2011; Benecke 2004; Branje and Fels 2012; Braun 2007, 2008; Chmiel and Mazur 2011; Cronin 1990; Díaz Cintas 2007, 2009; Díaz Cintas et al. 2007, 2010; Jiménez Hurtado 2007; Hyks 2005; Maszerowska et al. 2014; Orero 2008; Perego 2012, 2014; Snyder 2005, 2008) and the **AD literature related to didactics and course design** were analyzed (Krejtz et al. 2012a, 2012b; Kruger 2012; Matamala and Orero 2008; Orero 2005b; Remael and Vercauteren 2007). **AD guidelines** (ADC 2009; ADP 2010; AENOR 2005; Busarello and Sordo 2011; Doschand Benecke 2004; ITC 2000; Ofcom 2000, 2010; Neves 2011; Rai et al. 2010), including the ADLAB guidelines (Remael et al. 2015), as well as the **results of IO1** (especially those pertaining to competences and soft skills; ADLAB PRO 2017: 6-7; Chmiel and Mazur 2017) were consulted. These materials offered relevant hints on the competences to be included in a course and already gave important indications as to how future audio describers might operate. They thus led to the drawing up of most of the questions included in the questionnaire aiming to delineate the AD professional profile.

Following this first stage, specific **literature on questionnaire development** (Wyse 2012; Rea and Parker 2005) and on **empirical research carried out in the field of AVT and/or AD** (ADLAB 2013; Bogucki 2013; Chmiel and Mazur 2012, 2017; Fryer and Freeman 2012a, 2012b; Fryer et al. 2013; Perego 2016a, 2016b, 2016c; Szarkowska et al. 2013) were consulted before constructing the final questionnaire. Empirical research typically resorts to questionnaires and surveys: we capitalized on those studies in order to better design our questionnaire (in particular ADLAB 2013; Chmiel and Mazur 2012; Hutchinson 2017; Perego 2016c).

Although theoretical literature has been critical for the construction of the questionnaire, IO2 results will not be supported by a theoretical framework at this stage. The objective of IO2 is in fact practical and functional to IO3, which is the project output in charge of building the training course. IO3 will therefore be specifically addressing the issues of learning, acquiring skills and developing competence, and it will take decisions on the importance of particular sets of AD skills to be included in the course design.

2.1 MATERIALS

2.1.1 The questionnaire

To gather data that could help us to achieve the objectives of IO2 we drew up and circulated a questionnaire. The questionnaire (cf. Appendix for complete version) includes four sections, i.e. a section designed for all respondents and three sections designed for three selected categories of respondents: Audio describers, AD end-users and AD providers. These were the categories of respondents that could provide – directly or indirectly – the most relevant input regarding the skills and competences of the AD professional.

The questionnaire is structured as follows:

All Respondents		
Introduction to the Questionnaire Terms of Participation Instructions Section 1: Demographic Profile		
Audio Describers	AD End-users	Service Providers
Section 2: Your Activity as an Audio Describer	Section 2: End-user Experience	Section 2: Your Activity as a Service Provider
Section 3: The Status of AD and the Professional Circle	Section 3: End-user Perspective on the Work of the Audio Describer	Section 3: Skills and Competences of the Audio Describer
Section 4: Educational Background and AD Training	Section 4: End-user Satisfaction	
Section 5: Skills and Competences		

Table 1. Questionnaire structure

All respondents were given a brief introduction to the project and to the questionnaire, they were offered the terms of participation and they were given instructions on the compilation of the questionnaire. A set of demographic questions, common to all respondents, was designed to help us determine what factors may influence a respondent's answers or opinion. Collecting demographic information will enable us in the future to cross-tabulate and compare subgroups to see how responses vary between groups and countries.

The section designed for audio describers is the longest section because we believe that working audio describers are crucial purveyors of what is currently missing and needed in AD training, and they can provide useful information regarding the most difficult, undervalued and critical aspects of AD that must be included when designing an AD course.

The feedback from end-users is equally important. This section of the questionnaire is designed to gather information on the end-users' main sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction: a course cannot be comprehensive without including what end-users need.

Finally, we thought that the perspective of service providers could add important and complementary elements needed in a fully-fledged course.

In general terms, notwithstanding the study of the detailed literature that served as a solid theoretical basis for the selection of the questionnaire items, a major rewriting work was carried out in order to create an accessible questionnaire for non-academics. The editing work done on the technical language coming mainly from the fields of Audiovisual Translation, Linguistics and Narratology was aimed at producing a comprehensible questionnaire, avoiding jargon and suiting the language of all respondents.

Particular attention was devoted to structuring the section for AD end-users, who – if visually impaired – find it helpful to have an explanation of how the questions are formatted and how far through they are in the questionnaire (L. Fryer, personal communication, May 2017). Therefore, we opted for explanatory formulations such as “This section of the questionnaire is designed to gain knowledge on your frequency of use of 7 different types of audio description. For each type, you are given a choice of 5 possible answers. At

the end of the questions you will find a text box where you can write your comments if your answer is not included on the list” or “There now follow 3 more questions. The first gives you a choice of 8 possible answers, the second gives you a choice of 6 answers. In each case, please choose the answer that applies”.

2.1.2 The languages of the questionnaire

The questionnaire was developed in English to enable partners to read, share and work on the same document until the end of the drafting process. The finalized questionnaire was translated into **all the project languages** (Italian, Polish, Spanish, and Slovene; Dutch was used for the end-user section of the questionnaire) in order to increase the potential number of respondents in the partner countries. Other EU and non-EU languages were not taken into account because outside the direct objectives of IO2.

2.1.3 The distribution platform: Web Survey Creator

In order to reach out to as many respondents as possible, and to simplify the gathering of the data, we opted for the **online** distribution of the questionnaire. We chose Web Survey Creator as the platform for uploading and distributing the questionnaire, given its functionalities for the creation of accessible pages for respondents who are blind.

Web Survey Creator is a Web based survey tool developed and supported by Dipolar Pty Limited. Web Survey Creator has been developed with all the knowledge and experience gained from more than 15 years in the survey software business. Web Survey Creator enables the creation of online surveys and questionnaires with powerful functionality, respondent logins, data validation and flow control, and the production of a vast array of reports.

2.1.4 Accessibility

Creating an accessible questionnaire for people who are vision impaired was our main concern. As regards accessibility, Web Survey Creator uses “ARIA” (Accessible Rich Internet Applications)¹ tags throughout the “basic” question types. These include Text, Choice and Numeric Types. It also provides links for assistive technologies like JAWS. We made sure, by constantly contacting the Web Survey Creator team, that every type of question we opted for was supported by the ARIA technology. While setting up the questions, we also made sure we followed all the guidelines given to us from the Web Survey Creator to make the questions as accessible as possible. Once the questionnaire was uploaded on Web Survey Creator, it was necessary to test its accessibility – in fact, several piloting sessions, both with sighted respondents and with people who are vision impaired, were foreseen from the beginning and they proved crucial in finalizing the questionnaire

¹ARIA “defines ways to make Web content and Web applications (especially those developed with Ajax and JavaScript) more accessible to people with disabilities. For example, ARIA enables accessible navigation landmarks, JavaScript widgets, form hints and error messages, live content updates, and more. ARIA is a set of special accessibility attributes which can be added to any markup, but is especially suited to HTML. The role attribute defines what the general type of object is (such as an article, alert, or slider). Additional ARIA attributes provide other useful properties, such as a description for a form or the current value of a progressbar. ARIA is implemented in most popular browsers and screen readers. However, implementations vary and older technologies don't support it well (if at all). Use either “safe” ARIA that degrades gracefully, or ask end-users to upgrade to newer technology” (<https://developer.mozilla.org/en-US/docs/Web/Accessibility/ARIA>).

and improving its effectiveness. We tested the end-user section resorting to the help of visually impaired end-users, including students at the University of Trieste, who helped spot and solve most technical problems.

2.1.5 Ethics

The questionnaire distribution was intended to comply with ethical research needs and consent issues, which are gaining more and more importance in the AVT field, too (Orero et al. 2017). Because online surveys/questionnaires do not require the completion of a separate consent form, we included a consent sentence (“Please note that completing the questionnaire implies consent”) as a standard procedure. Consent was obtained by virtue of completion: participants were also given information on their voluntary participation, confidentiality/anonymity, right to withdraw (“It is important that you know that all of your responses will be strictly confidential and will be encoded in order to keep your anonymity in future publications and presentations”).

The protocol was discussed with and approved by UNITS’s ethical committee.

To guarantee confidentiality we selected the “anonymous” survey responses type in the Web Survey Creator platform: “This type of response is perfect for surveys where you want a single generic link to be provided to anyone who wants to complete the survey. The best feature of this link is its simplicity. No tracking information exists in the link – everyone uses the same link and is completely anonymous. Respondents must complete the survey in a single sitting, as there is no way to get back to previously entered responses.” (Web Survey Creator, 2017)

2.2 PROCEDURE

2.2.1 Questionnaire distribution and response details

The questionnaire was distributed in the form of an “anonymous survey”, sending respondents a link via email or sharing the link via social media such as Facebook and Twitter, and collecting anonymous responses (all respondents were treated as anonymous and their responses are not identifiable). Depending on their role (AD end-users, AD providers or audio describers), project partners completed the questionnaire anonymously, too. To maximise the number of respondents, no password protection was created. No interviews were conducted given the completeness of the questionnaire created, and the possibility to reach out sufficiently using only the online tools. Furthermore, we preferred to leave the questionnaire open for longer than planned in order to gather more responses and be able to obtain more generalized results.

Questionnaire distribution opened on the 4th of July 2017 and closed on the 17th of August 2017. Survey responses were received regularly for two weeks from the opening of the questionnaire; responses decreased in the weeks prior to its closing. (Figure 1).

We received 183 complete responses. The majority of respondents (N = 147) used the PC as a standard way of responding, whereas mobile phones (N = 29) and tablets (N = 7) were less preferred responding tools.

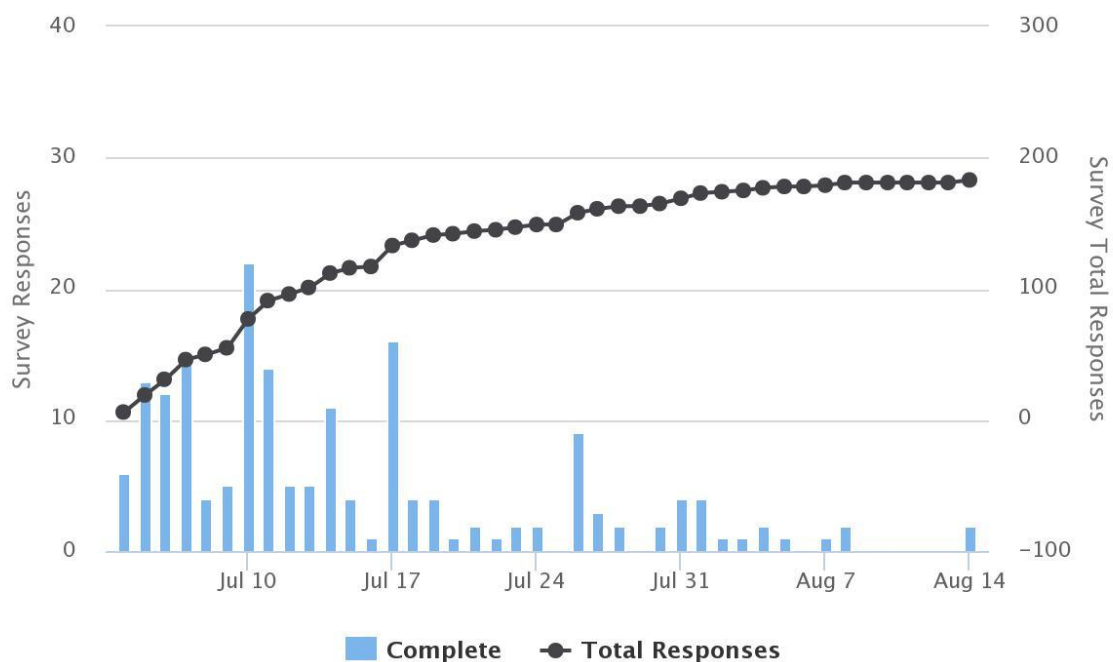


Figure 1. Temporal flux of received responses.

2.3 PARTICIPANTS

The overall number of completed responses was **183** (with 258 drafts or uncompleted responses). Responses were collected from **audio describers** (N = 65), **AD end-users** (N = 100) and **service providers** (N = 18).

In terms of **gender**, the overall sample is well balanced (Figure 2 below). In terms of their age, the respondents are distributed equally throughout the different age ranges and there is no overrepresented age range, with the exception of older adults (71-80) who represent only 2% of the respondents. In particular, 30 respondents (16%) fall within the age range of 31-40 years old, 41 respondents (22%) in the age range of 31-40 years old, 43 respondents (24%) in the age range of 41-50 years old and 43 respondents (24%) in the age range of 51-60 years old. A finer analysis of demographic results (planned for the future) would be useful to compare demographics across the different types of participants.

In terms of **sight condition**, an approximately equal number of people who are vision impaired and of sighted people filled in the questionnaire (85 fully sighted, 23 partially sighted, 75 totally blind), showing the effectiveness of the online tool as well as the high degree of accessibility of the questionnaire.

In terms of the highest degree of **education** achieved, data show that most respondents hold an MA/MSc degree or at least a BA, a vocational or a secondary school qualification. Only few (6%, overall 11 respondents) hold a PhD and no one recorded no instruction. This indicates an overall high level of education across the whole sample, which might not reflect a real situation, or which might indicate that only a fairly highly-educated sample of respondents was reached by the online questionnaire. In fact, this could

be explained, at least partially, by the manner of questionnaire distribution – we can assume that the less educated respondents may be more difficult to reach via electronic means.

The distribution of the sample in terms of gender, age, sight condition and level of education is illustrated in Figure 2:

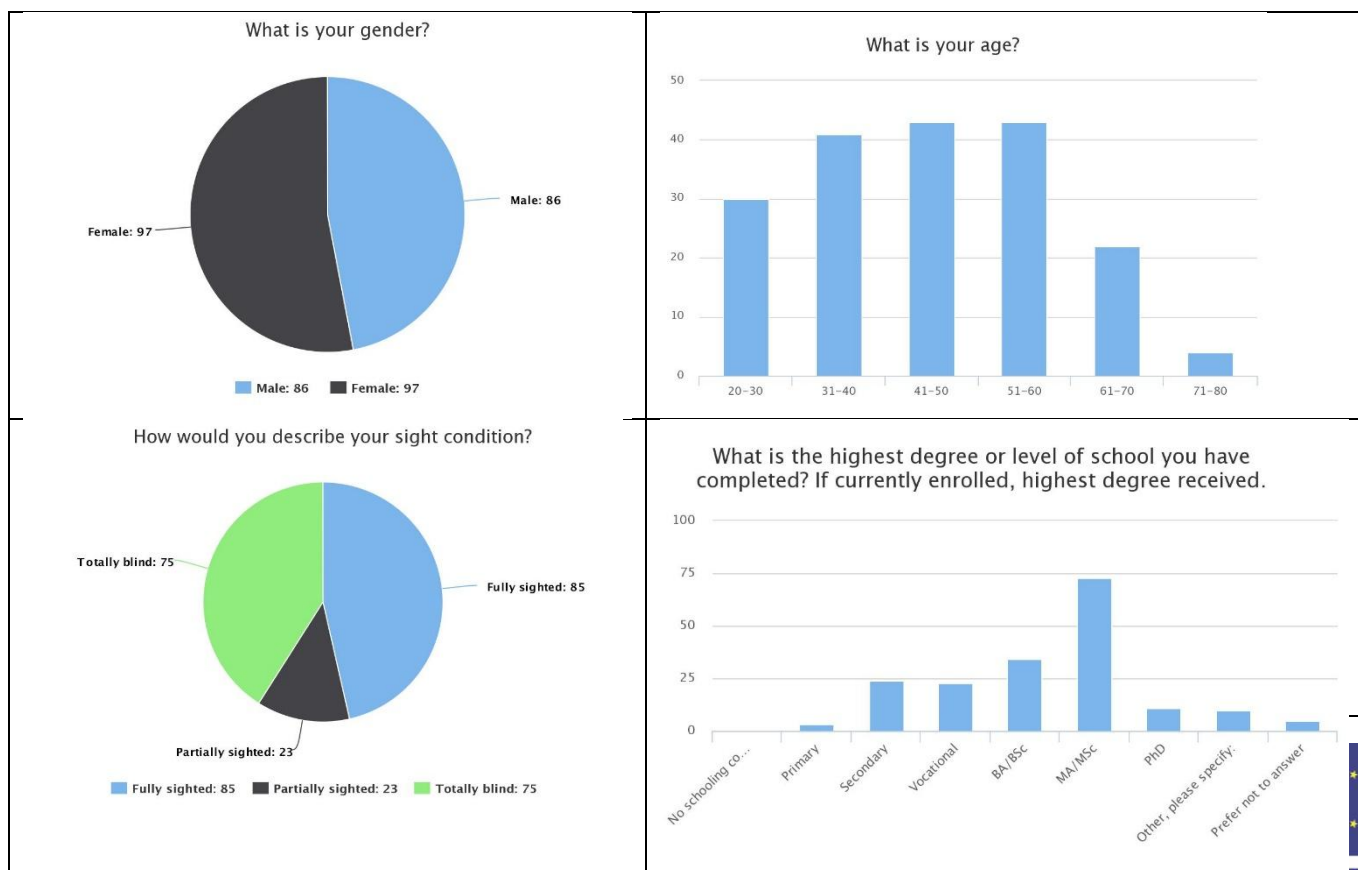


Figure 2. Distribution of the sample in terms of gender, age, sight condition and level of education

Respondents were mainly European (23 countries) with some non-European respondents (N = 26, coming, for example, from Brazil, Canada, Mexico) (Tab. 2). The most represented country in our survey was Italy (N = 53, 29%), followed by the UK (N = 25, 14%) and Spain (N = 25, 14%), Slovenia (N = 18, 10%), Poland (N = 13, 7%), and Belgium (N = 8, 4%), i.e. partner countries, where the questionnaire was disseminated directly, and where the questionnaires were available in the languages of the partner countries. These results show that the distribution of the questionnaire functioned well in the project countries, i.e. those more directly and actively involved in the direct dissemination of the questionnaire.

Although the number of respondents and the variety of nationalities represented are satisfactory, the fact that project partners' respective countries are best represented (perhaps given stronger personal contacts) might be seen as a limitation of this study (although in fact surveying project partner countries was the primary aim of the project). This however shows that it is very difficult to gather information about the AD situation in countries where a direct representative is not involved in the dissemination of the project results and questionnaires. Efforts were made to reach beyond project countries: a large network of contacts and stakeholders living and working outside the project countries was in fact involved and participated in the

questionnaire distribution in various ways. However, focusing both on the whole of Europe and even Oversea was beyond the scope and the resources of this project.

The most represented mother tongues of the respondents were Italian (N = 53), English (N = 27), Slovenian and Spanish (N = 14 each). The Korean respondent selected the English language questionnaire.

What country do you live in?

Country	Percentage	Count
BE - Belgium	4.37%	8
BR - Brazil	1.64%	3
CA - Canada	1.09%	2
CH - Switzerland	0.55%	1
CZ - Czech Republic	0.55%	1
DE - Germany	3.28%	6
DK - Denmark	1.64%	3
EE - Estonia	1.64%	3
ES - Spain	13.66%	25
FI - Finland	0.55%	1
FX - France, Metropolitan	0.55%	1
GB - United Kingdom	13.66%	25
IS - Iceland	0.55%	1
IT - Italy	28.96%	53
KR - Korea, South	0.55%	1
ME - Montenegro	0.55%	1
MX - Mexico	0.55%	1
NL - Netherlands	2.19%	4
PL - Poland	7.10%	13
PT - Portugal	1.09%	2
RO - Romania	0.55%	1
RS - Serbia	0.55%	1
RU - Russia	0.55%	1
SE - Sweden	0.55%	1
SI - Slovenia	9.84%	18
SK - Slovakia	3.28%	6
Total		183

Table 2. Distribution of the nationality of respondents in percentage and count

Our results are in line with the results of IO1 in terms of nations most involved in AD (in both cases, **Italy, the UK and Spain** are the most represented countries; Slovenia stands out in IO2 vs. Poland in IO1). “When the respondents were asked to list countries in which they teach AD, Spain was given as the first answer by 31% of the respondents (27). This was followed by Poland (22% – 19 responses), the UK (20% – 17) and Italy (9% – 8 responses). These countries were the most represented in our survey as project partners elicited responses mainly from AD trainers from their own countries. Partially, these results may also reflect the fact that these countries are very active in AD training”, and “We asked about languages in which audio description is drafted during training. English was given as the first answer by 25 respondents (29%), followed by Spanish (24% – 21 responses), Polish (20% – 17 responses).”(ADLAB PRO 2017: p. 6).

The results therefore fail to give a picture of the situation within the whole EU, with some countries being more and others less represented. In this respect, the picture that we offer is partial yet focused. However,

this is the first attempt to carry out a cross-national survey on the skills of the audio describer, and the data that we gathered still offer a valuable point of view.

In the following paragraphs a more detailed picture of the respondents' profile is given, focusing on all three categories: audio describers, end-users and service providers.

2.3.1 AUDIO DESCRIBERS

We collected **65 responses** from audio describers (22 male, 43 female).

Most audio describers ($N = 46$) have less than ten years' **experience**, with only 8 exceeding 16 years' experience (Fig. 3). This seems to be in line with the fact that AD is a fairly new discipline around the world, and it also suggests that the number of expert (and prestigious) leading figures within the AD community is restricted, as it is in other fields of AVT (Perego and Pavesi 2006: 103).

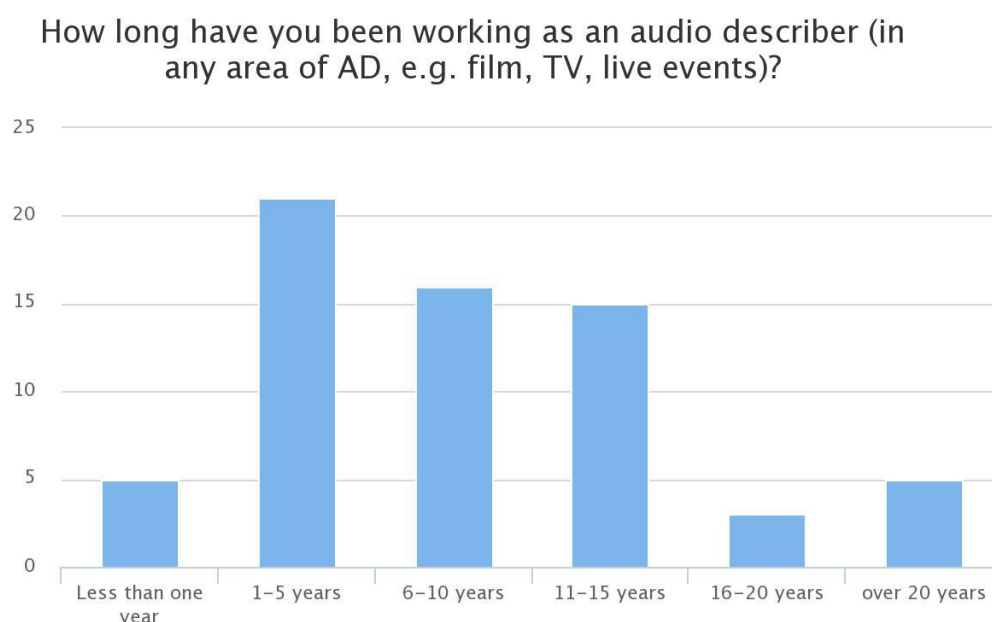


Figure 3. Audio describers' years of experience

The 5 most experienced audio describers (> 20 years of experience) distribute as follows: 2 are from the UK and they have described respectively more than 300 hours; 2 are from Spain, both declaring a production of more than 300 hours; 1 is from Slovenia with than 300 hours of production.

In terms of **hours of AD material produced in their career**, our sample shows that around half of the sample have produced over 300 hours (Figure 4).

How much AD material have you produced in your career?

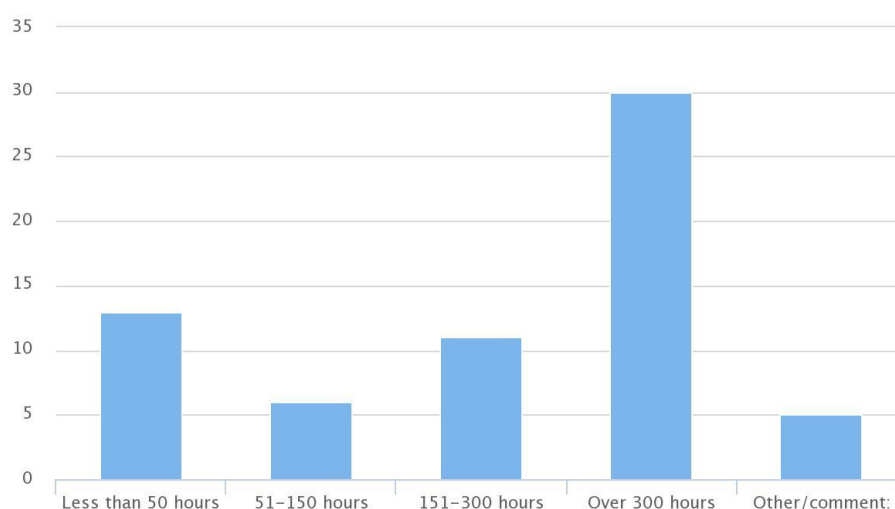


Figure 4. Distribution of AD hours produced in the audio describers' career

Overall, **the majority of audio describers are professional, trained, and paid workers**. This means that according to our sample only a few agree to audio describe if they are not professionally involved in this activity (This differs if compared to the situation regarding dubbing, at least in Italy: Pavesi and Perego 2008, 2008a, 2008b; It would certainly differ in other countries depending on the AVT sector involved. Although our group is not large enough to draw definite conclusions, it can illustrate interesting trends).

2.3.2 END-USERS

We obtained 100 responses from end-users (55 male, 45 female).

Interestingly, not all end-users of AD have visual impairments, in fact 5% of the end-users interviewed are fully sighted, while 74% are totally blind, and 21% partially sighted. The reasons for this can be better explained by some of the comments left by the fully sighted end-users of AD, such as "I am a consultant and advocate for audio description and work on behalf of the audio description association" or "I use AD during certain ad-described drama and documentary programmes on TV and AD-described movies through use of moviereaderprogramme (iPhone downloads the ad text)".

Moreover, 67% of end-users have a visual memory, whereas 29% do not (4% other).

As regards the age range: 22% of end-users are 20-30 years old, 17% are 31-40 years old, 20% are 41-50 years old, 23% are 51-60 years old, 15% are 61-70 years old, and 3% are 71-80 years old.

As regards the highest degree or level of school completed: 3% completed primary school, 22% secondary school, 18% vocational, 17 % BA/BSc, 29% MA/MSc, 5% PhD, 5% selected the option "other", and one end-user preferred not to answer.

2.3.3. SERVICE PROVIDERS

We obtained responses from 18 service providers. Most of the sample have been providing AD service for 1 to 5 (44%) or 6 to 10 (28%) years, showing again that this is quite a young professional field, and again most provide ADs in the areas of film (67%) and TV (56%). Only a minority deal with other types of AD such as museum, theatre, opera, other live events and AD of teaching materials (See Figure 5). Open answers pointed out advertising and websites as other areas of AD provision.

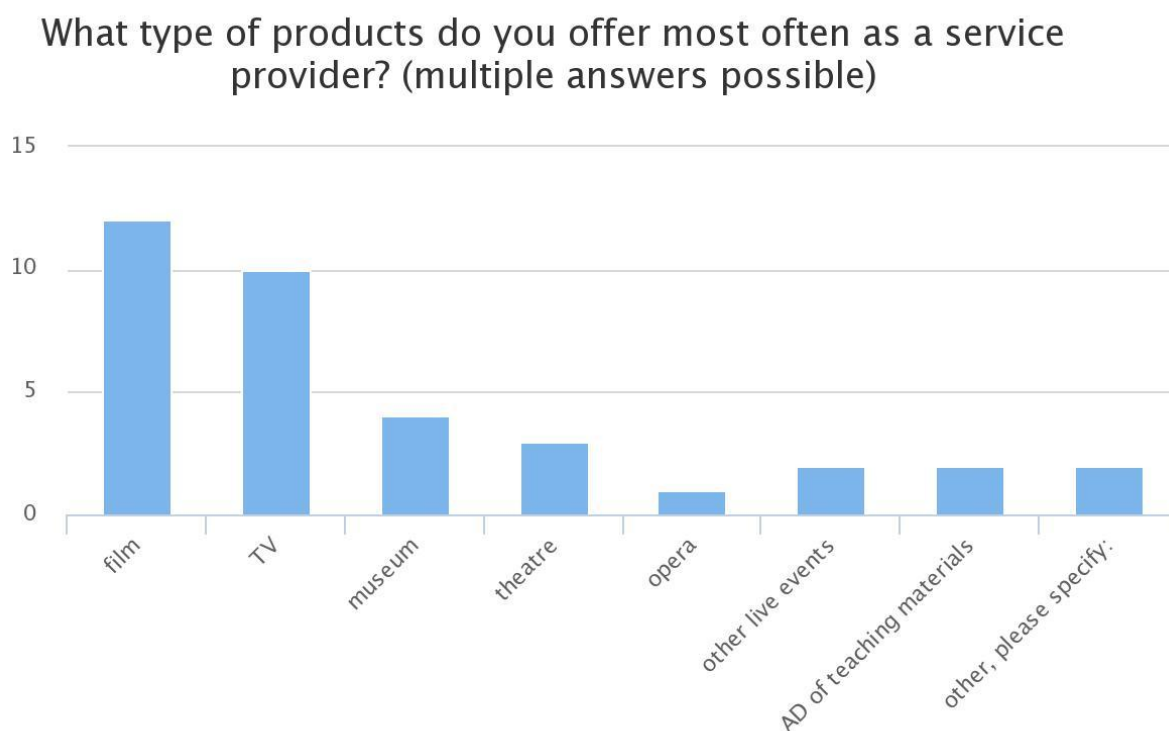


Figure 5. Types of products most often offered by providers

In terms of **AD material provided over the years**, our respondents offer a varied picture, showing that this business is not yet homogeneous with very few active providers offering up to several thousand hours, to possibly smaller providers able to offer less than 500 hours:

<input type="checkbox"/> Less than 50 hours	>	7 providers
<input type="checkbox"/> 51-150 hours	>	2 providers
<input type="checkbox"/> 151-300 hours	>	1 provider
<input type="checkbox"/> Over 300 hours	>	7 providers
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	>	1 provider (several thousand)

In terms of the **languages of AD production**, AD scripts are generally provided in one language (German, Dutch, English, Catalan, Italian, Polish, Portuguese), with only one provider offering AD scripts in Dutch and English, two in English and French, one in Catalan, Castellano, Galego and Euskara, and one in English, Swedish, Danish, French, German, Norwegian, Polish and Spanish.

3.RESULTS

3.1 SKILLS OF THE AUDIO DESCRIBER: THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE PROFESSIONALS

As stated in the introduction, the primary objective of IO2 was to pinpoint the necessary core skills (i.e. abilities that an individual acquires through training and experience) needed to train professional audio describers, in order to later outline their profile and offer a “template” of most relevant skills (the Matrix) serving as a starting point for the design of a specialized course (IO3) and the subsequent creation of training materials (IO4). This was obtained by analyzing the responses to the questionnaire of currently working audio describers and service providers.

The questionnaire sections distributed to audio describers and service providers included 5 blocks of questions revolving around the respondents’ opinions and views on the type of skills, competences and activities they consider most appropriate and needed by professionals looking to work in the area of audio description. Respondents were invited to rate on a 1-to-5 Likert scale a series of items in terms of their significance, and to add any further comments in the space provided. Answers to these blocks of questions represent the core of the questionnaire and indicate the direction that the ADLAB PRO course could take. Questions were divided into 4 areas of interest: 1) soft skills, 2) theoretical knowledge, 3) technical skills and 4) textual and linguistic skills.

After analyzing all the responses, **we created an “index of importance” for each item by summing the percentages of “important” + “extremely important” responses obtained from both audio describers and service providers. This enabled us to create a list of priorities that forms the Matrix of skills with different degrees of relevance.** Decisions on the importance of particular sets of AD skills to be included in the course design will be taken as part of the IO3 activity based on their relevance determined by the index of importance as well as based on the theoretical framework that will be developed. IO3 will also rely on IO1 results and the specific input from AD trainers who were interviewed (cf. ADLAB PRO 2017). This however will not be incorporated in the current Matrix.

3.1.1 Soft skills

In IO1, soft skills, or transferable skills, are defined as “skills that are not closely linked with one particular profession but instead can be transferred to other jobs and workplaces” (ADLAB PRO 2017: 2, based on Kiraly (2000, 2005; Kiraly et al. 2014)’s emergentist model; Chmiel and Mazur 2017). Soft skills are therefore not AD-related skills. IO1 lists the following soft skills: efficient work organization and time management, ethics, self-development, and teamwork. IO2 expanded the range of soft skills dealt with in the questionnaire (see table below).

We asked respondents to rate on a scale from 1 to 5 (1 – of no importance, 2 – of minor importance, 3 – neither important nor unimportant, 4 – important, 5 – extremely important), a series of 11 statements on the skills an audio describer should have to deliver a good quality audio description.

As far as soft skills are concerned, most audio describers and service providers find them all *important to very important* (see highlights (> 40% in Table 3). However, the ability to improvise and to write quickly to a deadline are regarded as more important skills for audio describers than for service providers (which is in line with and can be explained with audio describers being able to complete AD scripts on time, feeling they have enough time to perform the activity).

In terms of soft skills that an audio describer should possess, respondents (audio describers and service providers) find the following areas of knowledge *important* to *very important*, in this specific order:

Audio describers	Service providers
1. organize work efficiently 94%	1. organize work efficiently 100%
2. actively seek, evaluate, and incorporate feedback 93%	2. know when to call for expert help 100%
3. cope with time pressure 86%	3. cope with time pressure 89%
4. be assertive and fight for the quality of AD provision 86%	4. actively seek, evaluate, and incorporate feedback 89%
5. have good communicative and interpersonal skills 86%	5. have good communicative and interpersonal skills 84%
6. solve problems 86%	6. work in a team with blind patrons 83%
7. work in a team with blind patrons 80%	7. work in a team with colleagues 83%
8. know when to call for expert help 79%	8. be assertive and fight for the quality of AD provision 83%
9. improvise 67%	9. solve problems 72%
10. write quickly to a deadline 65%	10. write quickly to a deadline 72%
11. work in a team with colleagues 60%	11. improvise 50%

Table 3. Most important soft skills ordered in decreasing order of importance for audio describers and service providers

An overview of the responses per items is offered in the table below:

	1 Of no importance		2 Of minor importance		3 Neither important nor unimportant		4 Important		5 Extremely important	
	AD	SP	AD	SP	AD	SP	AD	SP	AD	SP
solve problems	-	-	2%	11%	12%	17%	46%	44%	40%	28%
have good communicative and interpersonal skills	-	6%	2%	-	12%	11%	48%	56%	38%	28%
be assertive and fight for the quality of AD provision	-	-	3%	-	11%	17%	40%	33%	46%	50%
cope with time pressure	2%	-	2%	-	11%	11%	54%	39%	32%	50%
organize work efficiently	-	-	3%	-	3%	-	49%	67%	45%	33%
know when to call for expert help	2%	-	3%	-	17%	-	57%	67%	22%	33%
actively seek, evaluate, and incorporate feedback	2%	-	2%	6%	5%	6%	51%	50%	42%	39%
work in a team with colleagues	3%	-	9%	11%	28%	6%	45%	44%	15%	39%
work in a team with blind patrons	2%	-	3%	-	15%	17%	54%	39%	26%	44%
write quickly to a deadline	5%	-	6%	6%	27%	22%	43%	44%	22%	28%
improvise	11%	11%	3%	22%	18%	17%	49%	39%	18%	11%

Table 4. Percentage of the responses to the question *On a scale from 1 to 5 (1 – of no importance, 2 – of minor importance, 3 – neither important nor unimportant, 4 – important, 5 – extremely important), rate the following statements. To deliver a good quality audio description, an audio describer should be able to ...* according to audio describers (AD) and service providers (SP)

Overall, a comprehensive course should make sure all these soft skills are taught or at least listed as important in a course curriculum. As far as soft skills are concerned, their **index of importance** (worked out based on the total of responses obtained) is as follows:

organize work efficiently	194
actively seek, evaluate, and incorporate feedback	182
know when to call for expert help	179
cope with time pressure	175
have good communicative and interpersonal skills	170
be assertive and fight for the quality of AD provision	169
work in a team with blind patrons	163
solve problems	158
work in a team with colleagues	143
write quickly to a deadline	137
improvise	117

Table 5. Index of importance for soft skills

3.1.2 Theoretical knowledge

Delivering a good quality audio description is among other things a matter of solid theoretical knowledge. All audio describers and service providers seem to agree on this, with only few areas of disagreement (Table 6 and 7).

In terms of specific knowledge that an audio describer should possess, respondents find *important* to *very important* the following areas of knowledge, in this specific order:

Audio describers	Service providers
1. World knowledge (61/65) > 94%	1. AD principles, guidelines, standards (18/18) > 100%
2. Target group (59/65) > 91%	2. World knowledge (17/18) > 94%
3. Language and linguistics (57/65) > 88%	3. Target group (17/18) > 94%
4. AD principles, guidelines, standards (54/65) > 83%	4. Language and linguistics (15/18) > 83%
5. Media accessibility (48/65) > 74%	5. Media accessibility (14/18) > 78%
6. Scriptwriting (46/65) > 71%	6. Scriptwriting (46/65) > 71%
7. AD history, status, applicable scenarios (41/65) > 63%	7. Audiovisual texts and multimodality (41/65) > 63%
8. Translation studies and AVT (33/65) > 51%	8. AD history, status, applicable scenarios (10/18) > 56%
9. Audiovisual texts and multimodality (32/65) > 49%	9. Translation studies and AVT (10/18) > 56%

Table 6. Most important areas of theoretical knowledge ordered in decreasing order of importance for audio describers and service providers

Interestingly, according to audio describers, the three most important aspects a good professional should master have nothing to do directly with the process of audio description, even though solid knowledge of the target group is the second most important thing for 91% of the respondents. Specific principles relating to AD, its history and processes are regarded as less important, and whatever has to do with multimodality and translation comes last. Whether this order should be followed in an AD course should be considered thoroughly.

The stance of service providers is similar (and all consider specific principles relating to AD, its history and processes less important than other aspects), even though according to all service providers the most important aspect of a good professional should be mastering AD principles, guidelines and standards, which only came in fourth place for audio describers. Another aspect that differentiates audio describers and service providers is the knowledge of the principle of audiovisual texts and multimodality: this is considered to be *important* or *very important* for 61% of the providers (who rank it in the seventh place) and for 49% of the audio describers (who rank it last on the list).

An overview of the responses per items is offered in the table below:

	1 Of no importance		2 Of minor importance		3 Neither important nor unimportant		4 Important		5 Extremely important	
	AD	SP	AD	SP	AD	SP	AD	SP	AD	SP
Audiovisual texts and multimodality (depending on your area of expertise, this can include for instance theatre semiotics, film studies, arts and museum studies, etc.).	5%	-	11%	6%	20%	33%	40%	39%	25%	22%
Media accessibility (standards, legislation, guidelines, principles and applicable scenario's, technologies, etc.)	2%	-	11%	11%	14%	11%	49%	44%	25%	33%
AD history, status, and applicable scenarios (e.g. museum AD, film AD, AD for live events, etc.)	5%	-	9%	17%	23%	28%	51%	56%	12%	-
AD principles, guidelines and standards	2%	-	6%	-	9%	-	35%	61%	48%	39%
Target group: types of visual impairment, end-user perception and cognitive processing, disabled needs	2%	-	-	6%	8%	-	40%	61%	51%	33%
Translation studies and audiovisual translation	6%	6%	9%	22%	33%	17%	43%	56%	8%	-
Language and linguistics (e.g. knowing the principles of text analysis, text cohesion and coherence; handling literary devices such as the use of similes, metaphors and figurative language; coping with different levels of formality in language; etc.)	3%	-	2%	6%	8%	11%	42%	56%	46%	28%
Scriptwriting	5%	-	2%	-	23%	22%	48%	61%	23%	17%
World knowledge	2%	6%	-	-	5%	-	58%	67%	35%	28%

Table 7. Percentage of respondents to the question *On a scale from 1 to 5 (1 – of no importance, 2 – of minor importance, 3 – neither important nor unimportant, 4 – important, 5 – extremely important), rate the following statements. To deliver a good quality audio description, an audio describer should possess solid theoretical knowledge and understanding in the following areas*, according to audio describers (AD) and service providers (SP)

As far as theoretical knowledge is concerned, the **index of importance** of its items is as follows:

World knowledge	188
Target group	185
AD principles, guidelines and standards	183
Language and linguistics	172
Media accessibility	151
Scriptwriting	149
Audiovisual texts and multimodality	126
AD history, status, and applicable scenarios	119
Translation studies and audiovisual translation	107

Table 8. Index of importance for theoretical knowledge

3.1.3 Technical skills

Regarding technical skills, our data show that audio describers and service providers share the same view on their ranking in terms of importance. In particular, AD script writing and textual editing, AD voicing and use of AD software are the top three technical skills required, in this order, for all respondents (Table 9).

In particular, nearly all audio describers (97%) and service providers (94%) agree that AD script writing and textual editing are definitely the most important skills. On the other hand, mixing AD with original sound is considered important only for 48% of the audio describers and 39% of the service providers, showing that this is something that a specialized figure should be in charge of, or that a specialised figure does.

Audio describers	Service providers
1 AD script writing and textual editing (63/65) > 97%	1. AD script writing and textual editing (17/18) > 94%
2 AD voicing (49/65) > 75%	2. AD voicing (17/18) > 94%
3 Use of AD software (47/65) > 72%	3. Use of AD software (10/18) > 56%
4 Technology of AD provision (45/65) > 69%	4. AD recording (12/18) > 67%
5 AD recording (41/65) > 63%	5. Technology of AD provision (7/18) > 39%
6 Mixing AD with original sound (31/65) > 48%	6. Mixing AD with original sound (7/18) > 39%



Table 9. Most important technical skills ordered in decreasing order of importance for audio describers and service providers

An overview of the responses per items is offered in the table below:

	1 Of no importance		2 Of minor importance		3 Neither important nor unimportant		4 Important		5 Extremely important	
	AD	SP	AD	SP	AD	SP	AD	SP	AD	SP
AD script writing and textual editing	-	-	-	6%	3%	-	34%	44%	63%	50%
Use of AD software	8%	-	5%	17%	15%	28%	46%	39%	26%	17%
Technology of AD provision	5%	-	5%	17%	22%	44%	55%	33%	14%	6%
AD voicing	3%	-	5%	-	17%	6%	45%	61%	31%	33%
AD recording	5%	-	14%	11%	18%	22%	42%	56%	22%	11%
Mixing AD with original sound	12%	6%	11%	28%	29%	28%	34%	39%	14%	-

Table 10. Percentage of respondents to the question: *On a scale from 1 to 5 (1 – of no importance, 2 – of minor importance, 3 – neither important nor unimportant, 4 – important, 5 – extremely important), rate the following statements. To deliver a good quality audio description, an audio describer should be able to possess solid technical knowledge and skills in the following areas*, according to audio describers (AD) and service providers (SP)

As far as technical skills are concerned, their **index of importance** is as follows:

AD script writing and textual editing	191
Use of AD software	128
Technology of AD provision	108
AD voicing	170
AD recording	131
Mixing AD with original sound	87

Table 11. *Index of importance for technical skills*

3.1.4 Textual and linguistic skills

Moving to a more micro level of analysis regarding textual and linguistic skills, we can observe, again, full agreement between audio describers and service providers. We can also notice that most of the features listed in the questionnaire and based on literature and guidelines were considered *important* or *extremely important* by the majority of respondents, in the following order (Table 12):

Audio describers		Service providers	
1	select significant visual information (65/65) 100%	1.	select significant visual information (18/18) 100%
2	use language that is suited to the product (65/65) 100%	2.	use language that is suited to the product (18/18) 100%
3	possess an excellent command of mother tongue (64/65) 98%	3.	possess an excellent command of mother tongue (18/18) 100%
4	use language that is suited to the audience (64/65) 98%	4.	use language that is suited to the audience (18/18) 100%
5	express meaning succinctly (63/65) 97%	5.	express meaning succinctly (18/18) 100%

6	provide the listener with a way of "seeing" ² what is described (59/65) 91%	6.	provide the listener with a way of "seeing" what is described (17/18) 94%
7	provide the listener with a way of "understanding" what is described (59/65) 91%	7.	use non-ambiguous language (17/18) 94%
8	use non-ambiguous language (56/65) 86%	8.	provide the listener with a way of "understanding" what is described (16/18) 89%
9	use language that sparks the imagination (55/65) 85%	9.	use language that sparks the imagination (16/18) 88%
10	compile an audio introduction (48/65) 74%	10.	compile an audio introduction (9/18) 50%

Table 12 Most important textual and linguistic skills ordered in decreasing order of importance for audio describers and service providers

Interestingly, compiling an audio introduction is regarded as more important for describers (74%) than for providers (50%) - which might have to do with mode. We can in fact assume that most providers provide TV AD whereas audio introductions are used more in theatre.

Results suggest that mastering micro linguistic and textual elements has to be taught in a comprehensive AD course in order to be able to draft good quality AD scripts.

An overview of the responses per items is offered in the table below:

	1 Of no importance		2 Of minor importance		3 Neither important nor unimportant		4 Important		5 Extremely important	
	AD	SP	AD	SP	AD	SP	AD	SP	AD	SP
express meaning succinctly	-	-	2%	-	2%	-	32%	33%	65%	67%
select significant visual information	-	-	-	-	-	-	20%	11%	80%	89%
use language that sparks the imagination	2%	-	2%	-	12%	11%	31%	39%	54%	50%
compile an audio introduction	5%	6%	3%	11%	18%	33%	52%	33%	22	17%
provide the listener with a way of "seeing" what is described	-	-	-	-	9%	6%	31%	33%	60%	61%
provide the listener with a way of "understanding" what is described	3%	6%	2%	-	5%	6%	36%	33%	55%	56%
possess an excellent command of mother tongue	-	-	-	-	2%	-	18%	22%	80%	78%
use non-ambiguous language	-	-	3%	6%	11%	-	31%	28%	55%	67%
use language that is suited to the product	-	-	-	-	-	-	31%	33%	61%	67%
use language that is suited to the audience	-	6%	-	6%	2%	-	29%	33%	69%	56%

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Table 13. Percentage of responses to the question *On a scale from 1 to 5 (1 – of no importance, 2 – of minor importance, 3 – neither important nor unimportant, 4 – important, 5 – extremely important), rate the following statements. To deliver a good quality audio description, an audio describer should be able to...*, according to audio describers (AD) and service providers (SP)

² Invoking visual memory in those who have it.

As far as textual and linguistic skills are concerned, their **index of importance** is as follows:

select significant visual information ³	200
possess an excellent command of mother tongue	198
express meaning succinctly	197
use language that is suited to the product	192
use language that is suited to the audience	187
provide the listener with a way of "seeing" what is described	185
use non-ambiguous language	181
provide the listener with a way of "understanding" what is described	180
use language that sparks the imagination	174
compile an audio introduction	124

Table 14. Index of importance for textual and linguistic skills

3.1.5 Most difficult aspects of the audio description process

The concluding set of items of this section of the questionnaire enquired about what audio describers find most difficult when they audio describe. The list included 28 items, some of which were taken directly from the previous questionnaire items of this section – for these reason, the list of items includes a mixture of soft skills, technical skills as well as textual and linguistic skills . We wanted to know whether what is considered important for good practice is also easy to accomplish during practice.

Results show that **audio describers feel pretty confident and find the AD process an overall simple process**, with the easiest aspects including possessing excellent command of mother tongue (43/65) 66%, knowing when to call for expert help (35/65) 54%, as well as organizing work efficiently (34/65) 52% and using language that is suited to the product (34/65) 52%, and finally actively seeking, evaluating, and if appropriate incorporating feedback (32/65) 49%, using language that is suited to the audience (32/65) 49%, and selecting significant visual information (32/65) 49% (and indeed, most AD literature addresses what to describe or what not to describe).

When on the job, the time they have to satisfactorily audio describe the commissioned products is typically enough (DATA: 76 % always or often, 9% rarely, no one answered never).

³ This typically follows adequate observation of the event or image.

The most *difficult* to *extremely difficult* aspects are ordered as follows, even though the majority of respondents does not seem to find the AD process either easy or difficult:

Audio describers	Service providers
1. being assertive and fighting for the quality of AD provision (26/65) 40%	1. mixing AD with original sound (7/18) 39%
2. improvising (e.g. for live ADs) (24/65) 37%	2. writing quickly to a deadline (7/18) 39%
3. coping with time pressure (22/65) 34%	3. selecting significant visual information (7/18) 39%
4. choosing the most appropriate wording (21/65) 32%	4. coping with time pressure (6/18) 33%
5. mixing AD with original sound (21/65) 32%	5. choosing the most appropriate wording (6/18) 33%
6. providing the listener with a way of "seeing" what is described (20/65) 31%	6. being assertive and fighting for the quality of AD provision (5/18) 28%
7. AD recording (19/65) 29%	7. improvising (e.g. for live ADs) (5/18) 28%
8. using language that sparks imagination (19/65) 29%	8. providing the listener with a way of "seeing" what is described (5/18) 28%
9. writing quickly to a deadline (18/65) 28%	9. using language that sparks imagination (5/18) 28%
10. selecting significant visual information (17/65) 26%	10. providing the listener with a way of "understanding" what is described (5/18) 28%
11. AD voicing (16/65) 25%	11. solving problems (5/18) 28%
12. providing the listener with a way of "understanding" what is described (16/65) 25%	12. AD recording (4/18) 22%
13. expressing meaning succinctly (15/65) 23%	13. using language that is suited to the audience (4/18) 22%
14. working in a team with blind patrons (12/65) 18%	14. AD voicing (4/18) 22%
15. using AD software (12/65) 18%	15. expressing meaning succinctly (4/18) 22%
16. using technology of AD provision (12/65) 18%	16. AD script writing and textual editing (3/18) 17%
17. using non-ambiguous language (12/65) 18%	17. organizing work efficiently (3/18) 17%
18. solving problems (12/65) 18%	18. using non-ambiguous language (3/18) 17%
19. using language that is suited to the audience (9/65) 14%	19. working in a team with blind patrons (3/18) 17%
20. actively seeking, evaluating, and if appropriate incorporating feedback (9/65) 14%	20. using AD software (2/18) 11%
21. AD script writing and textual editing (8/65) 12%	21. using technology of AD provision (3/18) 17%
22. communicating and cooperating with others (peers and blind persons) (8/65) 12%	22. compiling an audio introduction (2/18) 11%
23. compiling an audio introduction (7/65) 11%	23. possessing excellent command of mother tongue (2/18) 11%
24. working in a team with colleagues (6/65) 9%	24. using language that is suited to the product (2/18) 11%
25. organizing work efficiently (6/65) 9%	25. knowing when to call for expert help (1/18) 6%
26. using language that is suited to the product (6/65) 9%	26. communicating and cooperating with others (peers and blind persons) (1/18) 6%
27. possessing excellent command of mother tongue (3/65) 5%	27. actively seeking, evaluating, and if appropriate incorporating feedback (-) 0%
28. knowing when to call for expert help (3/65) 5%	28. working in a team with colleagues (-) 0%

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Table 15. Most difficult aspects of audio describing ordered in decreasing order of difficulty for audio describers and service providers

An overview of the responses per items is offered in the table below:

	1 Extremely difficult		2 Difficult		3 Neither easy nor difficult		4 Easy		5 Very easy	
	AD	SP	AD	SP	AD	SP	AD	SP	AD	SP
solving problems	2%	-	17%	28%	58%	61%	20%	11%	3%	-
communicating and cooperating with others (peers and blind persons)	2%	-	11%	6%	54%	67%	25%	22%	9%	6%
being assertive and fighting for the quality of AD provision	5%	6%	35%	22%	40%	9%	18%	17%	2%	6%
coping with time pressure	3%	-	31%	33%	43%	50%	22%	17%	2%	-
organizing work efficiently	2%	-	8%	17%	38%	50%	48%	33%	5%	-
knowing when to call for expert help	-	-	5%	6%	42%	67%	43%	28%	11%	-
actively seeking, evaluating, and if appropriate incorporating feedback	-	-	14%	-	37%	56%	38%	44%	11%	-
working in a team with colleagues	-	-	8%	-	48%	50%	31%	44%	14%	6%
working in a team with blind patrons	3%	-	15%	17%	42%	61%	32%	17%	8%	6%
writing quickly to a deadline	5%	-	23%	39%	42%	50%	26%	6%	5%	6%
improvising (e.g. for live ADs)	11%	-	26%	28%	35%	61%	20%	11%	8%	-
expressing meaning succinctly	-	-	23%	22%	32%	56%	38%	22%	6%	-
selecting significant visual information	3%	6%	23%	33%	25%	44%	42%	17%	8%	-
using language that sparks imagination	2%	6%	28%	22%	29%	61%	31%	11%	11%	-
choosing the most appropriate wording	3%	-	29%	33%	29%	61%	32%	6%	6%	-
compiling an audio introduction	3%	-	8%	11%	51%	61%	32%	28%	6%	-
providing the listener with a way of "seeing" what is described	3%	-	28%	28%	35%	50%	31%	22%	3%	-
providing the listener with a way of "understanding" what is described	3%	-	22%	28%	35%	61%	34%	11%	6%	-
possessing excellent command of mother tongue	-	-	5%	11%	29%	56%	54%	22%	12%	11%
using non-ambiguous language	2%	-	17%	17%	48%	67%	29%	17%	5%	-
using language that is suited to the product	-	-	9%	11%	38%	61%	42%	28%	11%	-
using language that is suited to the audience	2%	-	12%	22%	37%	61%	37%	17%	12%	-
AD script writing and textual editing	-	-	12%	17%	42%	56%	37%	22%	9%	6%
using AD software	6%	-	12%	11%	40%	61%	34%	22%	8%	6%
using technology of AD provision	3%	-	15%	17%	52%	61%	22%	17%	8%	-
AD voicing	8%	-	17%	22%	37%	61%	26%	17%	12%	-
AD recording	11%	-	18%	22%	42%	61%	23%	11%	6%	6%
mixing AD with original sound	14%	-	18%	39%	57%	50%	8%	11%	3%	-

Table 16. Number of responses to the question *What are the most difficult aspects you find when you audio describe?* Rate the following items on a scale from 1 to 5 (1 – extremely difficult, 2 – difficult, 3 – neither easy nor difficult, 4 – easy; 5 very easy), according to audio describers (AD) and service providers (SP)

As far as **the most difficult aspects of the audio description process** are concerned, their **index of importance** is as follows:

	Index
mixing AD with original sound	71
being assertive and fighting for the quality of AD provision	68
writing quickly to a deadline	67
coping with time pressure	67
improvising (e.g. for live ADs)	65
selecting significant visual information	65
choosing the most appropriate wording	65
providing the listener with a way of "seeing" what is described	59
using language that sparks imagination	58
providing the listener with a way of "understanding" what is described	53
AD recording	51
solving problems	47
AD voicing	47
expressing meaning succinctly	45
using non-ambiguous language	36
using language that is suited to the audience	36
working in a team with blind patrons	35
using technology of AD provision	35
AD script writing and textual editing	29
using AD software	29
organizing work efficiently	27
compiling an audio introduction	22
using language that is suited to the product	20
communicating and cooperating with others (peers and blind persons)	19
possessing excellent command of mother tongue	16
actively seeking, evaluating, and if appropriate incorporating feedback	14
knowing when to call for expert help	11
working in a team with colleagues	8

Table 17. Index of importance for the most difficult aspects of the audio description process

Although knowing what professionals find most difficult is interesting, this last group of items is a mixture of soft skills, technical skills as well as textual and linguistic skills, and as such it will not be part of the “core” Matrix.

3.2 AUDIO DESCRIPTION: THE PERSPECTIVE OF END-USERS

A specific section of the questionnaire was designed to gain data on the experience and the satisfaction of end-users (N = 100, 55 male, mainly visually impaired): feedback from end-users is crucial for improvement in a comprehensive and good quality course design. In the following paragraphs data on end-users's experience, satisfaction, most and least appreciated aspects of AD are reported, including feedback on specific categories.

3.2.1 End-user experience

This section of the questionnaire was designed to gain data on the end-users' frequency of use of 7 different types of audio description: film, TV, museum, theatre, opera, other live events and teaching materials. For each AD type, respondents were given a choice of 5 possible answers (very often, often, sometimes, rarely and never) and they could add extra comments if their answer was not included on the list.

Overall, we found that when AD is available most end-users use it especially when it comes to watching film or TV, or when visiting a museum. In the other cases (theatre, opera and live events), AD is not used that often (see Table 25).

	very often	often	sometimes	rarely	never
Film	35%	14%	19%	21%	11%
TV	30%	10%	17%	18%	25%
Museum	22%	14%	21%	21%	22%
Theatre	19%	6%	12%	19%	44%
Opera	13%	2%	8%	13%	64%
Other live events	12%	8%	20%	13%	47%
Teaching materials	20%	13%	16%	11%	40%

Table 18. Percentage of end-user responses to the frequency of use of different types of AD

Comments highlighted a lack of service in Slovenia, where AD is wished for but not consistently present: "Usually the programme with audio description is at such time that I don't watch the TV. We don't have audio description in theatres or opera in Slovenia", or "Unfortunately there is very little of such descriptions in Slovenia, absolutely there should be more".

In general, comments show that AD could be provided more often and advertised better when available:

- "The biggest problem is that we don't have information on the availability of audio description. It can't be used if its existence is unknown. This information should be improved, and favour (positive discrimination) accessibility to all kinds of audio descriptions"
- "I don't use AD with more frequency because there are not many options available"
- "Often the AD is not signalled, and can't be activated without the help of a sighted person it's hard to find AD for a lot of the situations mentioned here. In my opinion, the best one is museum AD"
- "In my town AD is poorly publicized and completely non-existent"

3.2.2 End-user satisfaction

End-user satisfaction is crucial in guiding audio describers towards best practices, and therefore also to guide scholars in the creation of reliable guidelines, recommendations and handbooks. That is why the results of this section of the questionnaire are very important for the future development of the project, and in particular for the construction of the ADLAB PRO course design (IO3).

This section on end-user satisfaction therefore aims to get an insight into the overall appreciation of AD on the part of the end-users, but also to gain knowledge on what is not working well and should be improved.

The ADLAB PRO course design will place emphasis on these aspects and it will incorporate them in its priorities. Considering the importance of unsatisfactory elements, we decided to include a series of specific items in order to bring them to the surface. We believe that this could help us to pinpoint those aspects that need more focus in an AD course.

In this section of the questionnaire, after enquiring about the blind end-users' overall stance on AD *quantity* and *quality* in their countries, we included five specific sub-sections regarding 1. The overall appreciation of a list of varied aspects of AD; 2. The end-users' stance on the quality of the information provided in ADs currently on the market; 3. The language and style of ADs; 4. The technical aspects of ADs; 5. The textual aspects of AD.

3.2.3 Overall AD appreciation according to end-users

When it comes to end-user satisfaction, results show that most visually impaired end-users are dissatisfied (46%) or very dissatisfied (22%) with the **quantity** of AD provided in their country, even though they seem to be quite happy with the **quality** of the products that are offered (14% are very satisfied and 58% are satisfied whereas overall only 11% are *dissatisfied* to *very dissatisfied*). This could be interpreted either as good news, showing that what is offered is high-quality, or that end-users tend to appreciate what they are offered irrespective of its quality.

A comment for all is the following: "Although I am satisfied with the quality of the AD in my country, I hope that the number of films with this system increases and that some TV channels improve the quality of the sound, that it does not overlap with the program dialogue and that the AD is set to the same volume as the program being broadcast. I am very satisfied with the scripts, the voices and the amount of series and films in Audesc of my local TV".

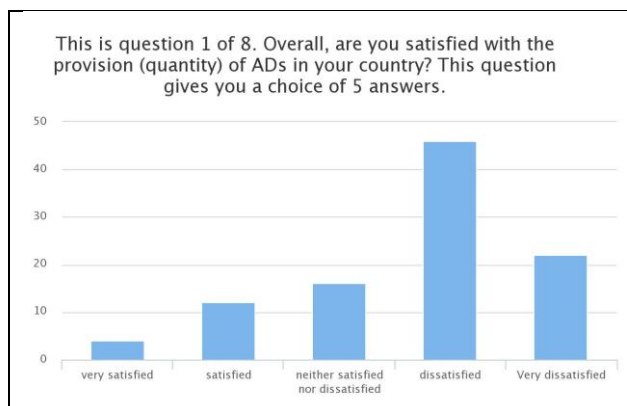


Figure 6. End-user satisfaction re. the quantity of AD provided in their country

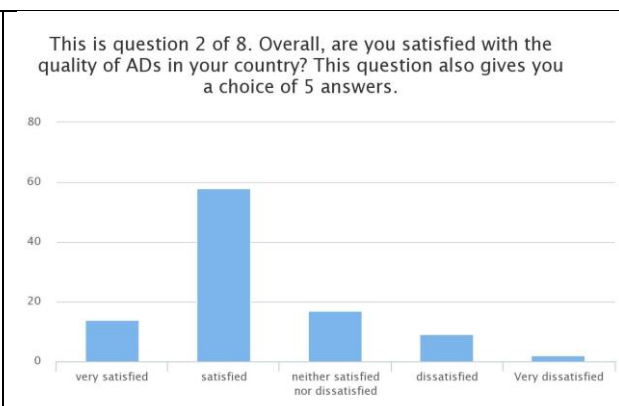


Figure 7. End-user satisfaction re. the quality of AD provided in their country

3.2.4 Most appreciated AD aspects

The overall positive attitude of end-users towards the AD products on the market links well with the results obtained when asking AD end-users what the specific **things they appreciate most** in an AD are. This question gave them a choice of 10 items, with the possibility of selecting multiple answers. These items were selected based on scholarly literature on AD as well as on AD guidelines (see Introduction), and they are a distillation of what are considered best practices used to produce good quality AD scripts. It should be

stressed that responses refer to AD in general and not to a specific context, therefore they cannot inform us on whether certain preferences depend on the AD mode or not.

Results show that no specific aspect really stands out and is considered significantly more important than the others. However, the answers suggest that end-users are very much concerned with the linguistic and the textual aspects of AD, which seem to be the ones that enable ADs to be usable, effective and enjoyable. The technical aspects related to AD are instead slightly overlooked, or at least considered less important.

In particular, we can notice that the narrative of the audio description (the description helps you follow the story) counts 71 preferences and it is followed by audio description that really helps end-users to understand and enjoy the product (66 counts). These data show that end-users are very much interested in a product that is effective (helps them understand and enjoy the product) irrespective of its precision on a micro-level. In fact, it has been reported that blind end-users can often do without AD and still follow what is going on e.g. in a film. If an AD is to be added, this has to be really beneficial. Overall, a good AD that satisfies end-users is a blend of several aspects that need to co-occur. These are listed below, including the count of the end-user preferences (out of 100 responses and they are ordered from the most favoured (and therefore ticked) aspect to the aspect that has been selected less often (respondents could select multiple answers): and they are ordered from the most favoured (and therefore ticked) aspect to the aspect that has been selected less often (respondents could select multiple answers):

	Counts
Narrative of the audio description (the description helps you follow the story)	71
Audio description that really helps end-users to understand and enjoy the product	66
Sentence structure of the audio description (clear and easy to follow)	61
Language and style of the audio description that are suited to the audience and to the product (by product, we mean e.g. play, film, episode of a TV series or TV programme, work of art such as painting or artefact, etc.)	55
Vocabulary of the audio description (vivid, imaginative, clear, adequate)	55
Engaging audio description that gives the listener an emotional experience	47
Selection and organization of the information	46
Technical aspects of the audio description that the describer can control (e.g. AD timing, vocal skills)	38
Grammatically correct language	38
Technical aspects of the audio description that the describer cannot control (e.g. sound quality, mix of the AD with original sound)	36

Table 19. Most appreciated AD aspects according to end-users

Finer analyses by country (planned for the future) could round up the picture and give a more comprehensive view of specificities linked to countries.

3.2.5 Overall quality of the information in ADs

The questionnaire also enquired about the things that end-users most dislike in an AD as far as the overall **quality of the information** is concerned. This question gave respondents a choice of 12 answers, and multiple answers were possible, and it enquired about the aspects of AD end-users dislike more.

Interestingly, the aspect of AD that typically disturbs end-users the most is the lack of synchronization of the description with the dialogue and sound effects or with the images. This is followed by the fact that the audio describer talks over the dialogue or critical sound effects as well as the lack of coherence of the AD text. The mixture of poor quality technical and textual aspects can be disruptive for visually impaired viewers, who highlight this strongly in their answers.

The technical aspects that bother end-users the most (lack of synch, overlapping dialogues) are not necessarily the result of the work of the audio describer. In any case, results suggest that a comprehensive AD course should emphasize the importance of blending high quality content with high quality technical aspects of AD delivery. This result suggests we should consider devoting a full course module to the technical aspects of AD delivery in order to make audio describers and stakeholders aware of the importance of these AD features.

Below the comprehensive list of aspects that end-users most dislike in an AD as far as the overall **quality of the information** is concerned. The items are ordered by counts:

	Counts
The audio description is not well synchronized with the dialogue and sound effects or with the images	63
The audio describer talks over the dialogue or critical sound effects	55
The audio description is not coherent (i.e. does not makes comprehensible links between visual images, between images and sound and between images and dialogue)	55
The audio description does not make the product easy to follow	49
The audio description includes significant omissions (e.g. unexplained noises; unidentified characters)	47
The audio describer gives their own opinion and prevents you from drawing your own conclusions	44
The audio description does not convey the world of the product (by product, we mean e.g. play, film, episode of a TV series or TV programme, work of art such as painting or artefact, etc.)	37
The audio description includes too little information	36
The audio description includes too much information	34
The audio describer does not know what to say, how to say it, where to say it	34
The audio description does not give you independence	32
The audio description does not make the product more enjoyable	26

Table 20. *Most disliked aspects of AD in terms of quality of the information according to end-users*

An overview of the list above suggests that an AD course should insist on what end-users feel they are lacking. According to our data, something that needs to be improved is the ability to measure out details so as not to add too many or deliver too few. In general, though, attention should be paid to creating coherent ADs that help end-users understand but also enjoy the product.

3.2.6 AD language and style

Another area of enquiry of our questionnaire regarded language and style. We asked respondents what are the things they **most dislike** in an AD as far as **language and style** are concerned. This question gave them a choice of 10 answers, and multiple answers were possible. Results show that end-users dislike the most AD scripts that use unclear vocabulary and complex sentence structures as well as too many repetitions. Overall,

language and style are a very important aspect in AD and end-users seem to be very sensitive to these aspects and unwilling to accept complex lexicon and syntax. A comprehensive course should therefore devote systematic attention to language and style in AD since bad management of language and style could seriously compromise the comprehension and enjoyment of most AD scripts. Although the items presented in the questionnaire seem to be equally important for end-users, below is a comprehensive list with number of counts, which should guide the work of IO3:

Lack of comprehensible vocabulary	51
Lack of comprehensible sentence structure	48
Too many repetitions	47
Ambiguous language	43
The description is not engaging	40
Inaccurate use of words	36
Lack of grammatically correct language	36
Language not suited to the product	31
Lack of specialized language and terminology	29
Lack of evocative vocabulary	22
Language not suited to the audience	19

Table 21. *Most disliked aspects of AD in terms of language and style according to end-users*

What end-users' responses seem to tell us is that they feel the need for engaging descriptions. These should use specialized vocabulary, i.e. words chosen accurately that are able to describe the material in question in a precise way even though this might at times generate ADs whose language and style are difficult for the target audience (only 19% of respondents dislike language that is not suited to the audience; a larger number (31%) find it more disturbing when the AD language is not suited to the product being described). This could be linked to the social and educational functions of AD: end-users learn about the world they cannot see.

3.2.7 AD technical aspects

Also from the **technical point of view**, all items selected for the questionnaire were deemed crucial for good AD reception, and end-users tend to dislike ADs that are not technically sound. In particular, the things that end-users most dislike in an AD as far as the overall **technical aspects** are concerned are respectively the following:

AD timing	53
Vocal skills of the describer (ability to deliver AD clearly and engagingly)	44
The mix of the AD with original sound	54
Technical sound editing (e.g. cutting out repeats so the recording flows smoothly)	32

Table 22. *Most disliked technical aspects of AD according to end-users*

3.2.8 Textual aspects

Finally, the last area of enquiry of our questionnaire regarded AD textual aspects. We asked respondents what are the things they **most dislike** in an AD as far as **textual aspects** are concerned. This question gave them a choice of 14 answers, and multiple answers were possible. Table 23 illustrates their stance graphically:

The things end-users most dislike in an AD as far as the **textual aspects** are concerned mainly regard the lack of an effective narrative (description fails to tell a story and engage the listener), as well as the lack of the right level of detail (44%) and the failure to provide it with a way of understanding what is described (49%). These are the areas that seem to need more emphasis in training. Overall, the stance of respondents is illustrated in the following:

	Counts
Lack of effective narrative (description fails to tell a story and engage the listener)	53
Failure to provide you with a way of understanding what is described	49
Lack of details	44
Inability to use imagery that appeals to senses other than vision (e.g. touch, taste, smell)	42
Lack of background and contextual information	41
Failure to provide you with a way of "seeing" what is described	36
Excess of details	34
Selection of visual information	31
Lack of audio introductions	28
Failure to provide an emotional experience	27
Failure to engage you	24
Inability to use literary devices (e.g. simile or metaphor, etc.)	21
Phraseology and wording	20
General organization of the AD text	19

Table 23. *Most disliked textual aspects of AD according to end-users*

Merging all these features into a single table based on the index of importance would result in the following table:

Narrative of the audio description	71	most appreciated aspects of AD	End-users
AD that really helps end-users to understand and enjoy the product	66	most appreciated aspects of AD	End-users
The audio description is not well synchronized with the dialogue and sound effects or with the images	63	overall quality of the information in ADs (most disliked/need to be improved)	End-users
Sentence structure of the audio description (clear and easy to follow)	61	most appreciated aspects of AD	End-users
Language and style of the AD that are suited to the audience/product	55	most appreciated aspects of AD	End-users
Vocabulary of the audio description	55	most appreciated aspects of AD	End-users
The audio describer talks over the dialogue or critical sound effects	55	overall quality of the information in ADs (most disliked/need to be improved)	End-users
The audio description is not coherent (i.e. does not makes comprehensible links between visual images, between images and sound and between images and dialogue)	55	overall quality of the information in ADs (most disliked/need to be improved)	End-users
The mix of the AD with original sound	54	technical aspects (most disliked/need to be improved)	End-users
AD timing	53	technical aspects (most disliked/need to be improved)	End-users
Lack of effective narrative (description fails to tell a story and engage the listener)	53	textual aspects (most disliked/to be improved)	End-users
Lack of comprehensible vocabulary	51	AD language and style (most disliked/need to be improved)	End-users
The audio description does not make the product easy to follow (49 counts) 49%	49	overall quality of the information in ADs (most disliked/need to be improved)	End-users
Failure to provide you with a way of understanding what is described	49	textual aspects (most disliked/to be improved)	End-users
Lack of comprehensible sentence structure	48	AD language and style (most disliked/need to be improved)	End-users
Engaging AD that gives the listener an emotional experience	47	most appreciated aspects of AD	End-users
The audio description includes significant omissions (e.g. unexplained noises; unidentified characters)	47	overall quality of the information in ADs (most disliked/need to be improved)	End-users
Too many repetitions	47	AD language and style (most disliked/need to be improved)	End-users
Selection and organization of the information	46	most appreciated aspects of AD	End-users
The audio describer gives their own opinion and prevents you from drawing your own conclusions	44	overall quality of the information in ADs (most disliked/need to be improved)	End-users
Vocal skills of the describer (ability to deliver AD clearly and engagingly)	44	technical aspects (most disliked/need to be improved)	End-users
Lack of details	44	textual aspects (most disliked/to be improved)	End-users
Ambiguous language	43	AD language and style (most disliked/need to be improved)	End-users
Inability to use imagery that appeals to senses other than vision (e.g. touch, taste, smell)	42	textual aspects (most disliked/to be improved)	End-users
Lack of background and contextual information	41	textual aspects (most disliked/to be improved)	End-users
The description is not engaging	40	AD language and style (most disliked/need to be improved)	End-users
Inaccurate use of words	40	AD language and style (most disliked/need to be improved)	End-users



Technical aspects of the AD that the describer can control (e.g. AD timing, vocal skills)	38	most appreciated aspects of AD	End-users
Grammatically correct language	38	most appreciated aspects of AD	End-users
The audio description does not convey the world of the product (by product, we mean e.g. play, film, episode of a TV series or TV programme, work of art such as painting or artefact, etc.)	37	overall quality of the information in ADs (most disliked/need to be improved)	End-users
Technical aspects of the AD that the describer cannot control (e.g. sound quality, mix of the AD with original sound)	36	most appreciated aspects of AD	End-users
The audio description includes too little information	36	overall quality of the information in ADs (most disliked/need to be improved)	End-users
Lack of grammatically correct language	36	AD language and style (most disliked/need to be improved)	End-users
Failure to provide you with a way of "seeing" what is described	36	textual aspects (most disliked/to be improved)	End-users
The audio description includes too much information	34	overall quality of the information in ADs (most disliked/need to be improved)	End-users
The audio describer does not know what to say, how to say it, where to say it	34	overall quality of the information in ADs (most disliked/need to be improved)	End-users
Excess of details	34	textual aspects (most disliked/to be improved)	End-users
The audio description does not give you independence	32	overall quality of the information in ADs (most disliked/need to be improved)	End-users
Technical sound editing (e.g. cutting out repeats so the recording flows smoothly)	32	technical aspects (most disliked/need to be improved)	End-users
Language not suited to the product	31	AD language and style (most disliked/need to be improved)	End-users
Selection of visual information	31	textual aspects (most disliked/to be improved)	End-users
Lack of audio introductions	31	textual aspects (most disliked/to be improved)	End-users
Lack of specialized language and terminology	29	AD language and style (most disliked/need to be improved)	End-users
Failure to provide an emotional experience	27	textual aspects (most disliked/to be improved)	End-users
The audio description does not make the product more enjoyable	26	overall quality of the information in ADs (most disliked/need to be improved)	End-users
Failure to engage you	24	textual aspects (most disliked/to be improved)	End-users
Lack of evocative vocabulary	22	AD language and style (most disliked/need to be improved)	End-users
Inability to use literary devices (e.g. simile or metaphor, etc.)	21	textual aspects (most disliked/to be improved)	End-users
Phraseology and wording	20	textual aspects (most disliked/to be improved)	End-users
Language not suited to the audience	19	AD language and style (most disliked/need to be improved)	End-users
General organization of the AD text	19	textual aspects (most disliked/to be improved)	End-users

Table 24. *End-users' perspective re AD*

The table is difficult to interpret given the vast amount of data it offers. However, at a closer look, it demonstrates that according to the perspective of the end-users, we can notice that textual and linguistic skills seem to be critical features for them: this is indicated by their explicit appreciation of AD aspects that have to do with the way language is used to deliver information. End-users favour a clear coherent and engaging AD narrative that helps them follow and enjoy the product thanks to simple syntax and well-chosen comprehensible vocabulary. These are elements on the top of the list for users, which is also confirmed indirectly by their choice of the most disliked aspects of AD. Furthermore, as far as the technical aspects of AD are concerned, end-users give great importance to synchronization (i.e. timing) and a proper mix of AD with original sound as well as the vocal skills of the describer. This suggests that the perspective of end-users should be taken into account to produce appreciated products.

3.2.9 Hopes for the future

To conclude, it is interesting to note that in the final analysis end-users wish for more ADs rather than more high-quality ADs, as illustrated in their responses to the closing question to the questionnaire: “What are your hopes regarding AD?”. Multiple answers were allowed, and the stance of respondents is quite clear:

This is question 8 of 8. What are your hopes regarding AD?

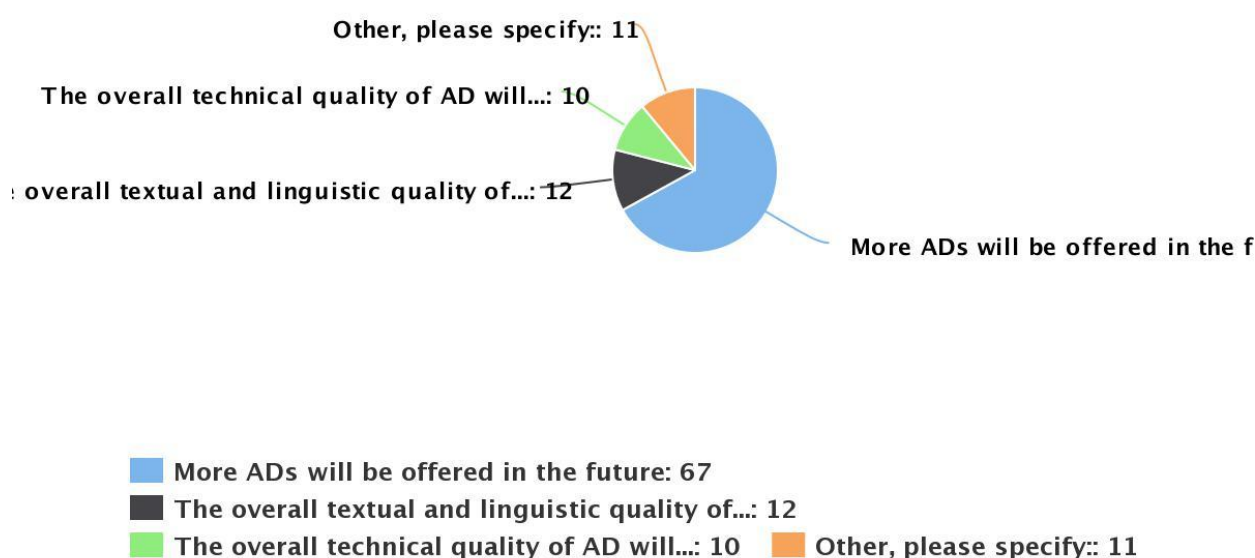


Figure 8. Users' hopes for the future

Most responses (76 counts) wish that more ADs will be offered in the future. The quality of AD seems to be of secondary importance, in a context where not enough AD is offered. The hope that the overall textual and linguistic quality of AD will improve has been chosen by 12 respondents and the hope that the overall technical quality of AD will improve only by 10.

The open comments provided by end-users and reported below contribute to making their stance even clearer:

- That after the news programmes and informative programmes such as "about food"... also receive AD when only images are shown. This is not so essential when the images are accompanied by conversations but it is essential when only visuals are shown because in that case you miss everything.
- More information and professional help from the competent/responsible institutions
- Both the increase and the improvement of the quality of the AD are necessary. In my opinion, quality needs to improve if the quantity increases
- That the volume of the AD is well synchronized with the other TV channels
- I have no expectations
- Standard formats and supports
- Quantity should never be over quality - it would be great to have an overall improvement on all 3 of the above...
- An unified European audio description project, in which text scripts would be produced for English and translated in all the other languages of the European union
- I would hope that AD would become a routine/standard provision in all or most forms of artistic expression. I would hope that the promotion/marketing of AD is increased/improved so that more people living with sight loss are aware of the availability of AD. I would hope that the training and professional development of describers continues and that such development continues to involve close consultation with AD end-users.
- All of those above

And on a more general line:

- I wish there would be more movies with audio description.
- At documentaries it is very annoying that half of the film is with subtitles and half is read. Instead of subtitles there could be the description of animals, environment, buildings ...
- A good AD can only be achieved through good collaboration with the screenwriter of the production and someone who has received a specific audiovisual training.
- It will be brilliant that TV channels offering AD, mainly public broadcasters, after doing such service, they don't use it further in their VOD (video on demand) service.
- If we would have a lot of ADs, this profession will change to satisfy our demands
- Automatic availability of a clear information about suitability of a given model of TV-receiver for delivering AD in concrete technical formats.
- There needs to be a national ad focus group that follows up creating awareness and improving on quantity and quality

3.3 MERGING THE PERSPECTIVES: THE MATRIX

The questionnaire enabled us to gather a very large amount of data illustrating the perspective of three crucial categories of respondents: audio describers, AD end-users and service providers. Many aspects of AD have been considered separately. However, for the purposes of the project, and in order to design an AD course, all these aspects need to be ordered following a rank of importance. To do so, we created an **index of importance** for all AD related aspects dealt with in the questionnaire. In particular, these were grouped into

four categories: 1) soft skills, 2) theoretical knowledge, 3) technical skills and 4) textual and linguistic skills, which constitute the core of AD competences.

Single items belonging to the above categories have been incorporated in the Matrix ordered by importance, therefore showing what could be given more space in an AD course. The Matrix ranks skills as they are seen by professionals (audio describers and service providers) and it is backed up by the stance of end-users, and it will be the starting point for the preparatory work of IO3.

Competence	INDEX	Type of competence	Respondents
select significant visual information	200	textual and linguistic skills	AD + SP
possess an excellent command of mother tongue	198	textual and linguistic skills	AD + SP
express meaning succinctly	197	textual and linguistic skills	AD + SP
organize work efficiently	194	soft skill	AD + SP
use language that is suited to the product	192	textual and linguistic skills	AD + SP
AD script writing and textual editing	191	technical skills	AD + SP
World knowledge	188	theoretical knowledge	AD + SP
use language that is suited to the audience	187	textual and linguistic skills	AD + SP
Target group	185	theoretical knowledge	AD + SP
provide the listener with a way of "seeing" what is described	185	textual and linguistic skills	AD + SP
AD principles, guidelines and standards	183	theoretical knowledge	AD + SP
actively seek, evaluate, and incorporate feedback	182	soft skill	AD + SP
use non-ambiguous language	181	textual and linguistic skills	AD + SP
provide the listener with a way of "understanding" what is described	180	textual and linguistic skills	AD + SP
know when to call for expert help	179	soft skill	AD + SP
cope with time pressure	175	soft skill	AD + SP
use language that sparks the imagination	174	textual and linguistic skills	AD + SP
Language and linguistics	172	theoretical knowledge	AD + SP
AD voicing	170	technical skills	AD + SP
have good communicative and interpersonal skills	170	soft skill	AD + SP
be assertive and fight for the quality of AD provision	169	soft skill	AD + SP
work in a team with blind patrons	163	soft skill	AD + SP
solve problems	158	soft skill	AD + SP
Media accessibility	151	theoretical knowledge	AD + SP
Scriptwriting	149	theoretical knowledge	AD + SP
work in a team with colleagues	143	soft skill	AD + SP
write quickly to a deadline	137	soft skill	AD + SP
AD recording	131	technical skills	AD + SP
Use of AD software	128	technical skills	AD + SP
Audiovisual texts and multimodality	126	theoretical knowledge	AD + SP
compile an audio introduction	124	textual and linguistic skills	AD + SP
AD history, status, and applicable scenarios	119	theoretical knowledge	AD + SP
Improvise	117	soft skill	AD + SP
Technology of AD provision	108	technical skills	AD + SP
Translation studies and audiovisual translation	107	theoretical knowledge	AD + SP
Mixing AD with original sound	87	technical skills	AD + SP

Table 25. The Matrix

Data from the Matrix can be presented through the following pie chart that better shows the core competences necessary to become a professional audio describer (according to professionals). The chart shows that textual and linguistic skills as well as soft skills are the skills considered more important for audio describers. Within each group, there seems to be no significant difference in terms of what specific skill is more important.

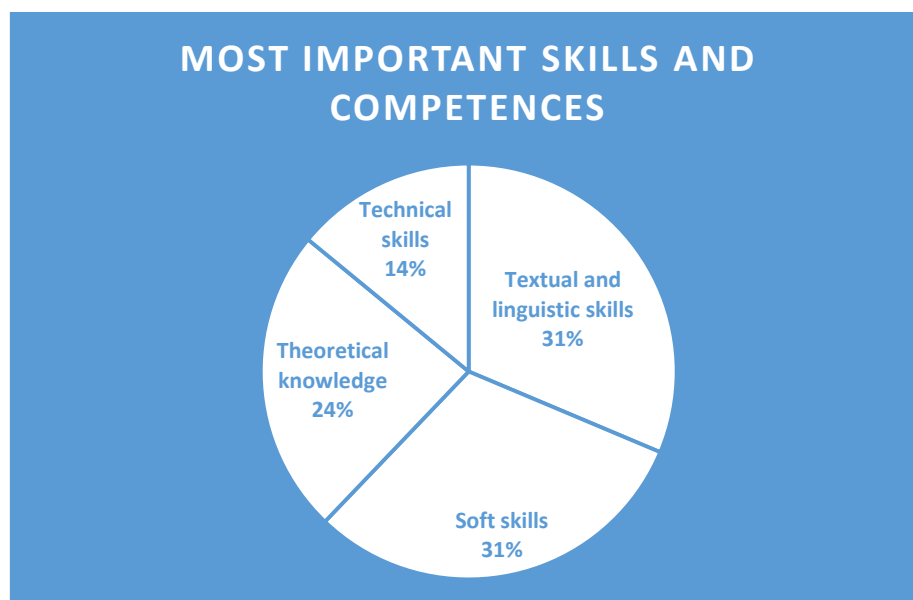


Figure 9. Most important skills of the audio describer according to the professionals

If we consider the perspective of the end-users, we can notice that textual and linguistic skills seem to be critical features also for them: this is indicated by their explicit appreciation of AD aspects that have to do with the way language is used to deliver information. End-users favour a clear coherent and engaging AD narrative that helps them follow and enjoy the product thanks to simple syntax and well-chosen comprehensible vocabulary. These are elements on the top of the list for users, which is also confirmed indirectly by their choice of the most disliked aspects of AD.

A discrepancy between end-users and professionals is found as far as the technical aspects of AD are concerned: the Matrix shows that, overall, technical skills are not regarded as fundamental by professionals - they cover only 14% of the pie chart. However, end-users give great importance to synchronization (i.e. timing) and a proper mix of AD with original sound as well as the vocal skills of the describer. This suggests that the perspective of end-users should be taken into account to produce appreciated products.

3.4 STATUS OF AD AND THE AUDIO DESCRIBER AS SEEN FROM THE INSIDE AND FROM THE OUTSIDE

The work of audio describers is not necessarily known outside professional circles, and if it is known, there may be some confusion about its nature. With our questionnaire, we set out to gain knowledge on how this profession is seen both from the inside and from the outside world. We asked respondents whether in their opinion the work of the audio describer is an “art” (an innate talent that can be refined on the job) or a “craft” (an activity you learn, the result of specialized training) (Haig 2005). Results are summed up in Table 26 and illustrated visually in Figure 10.

Most respondents (professional audio describers, service providers and end-users) agree it is a bit of both or see it more as a practical type of job (a craft), with a very limited number of respondents considering it an art (however, more audio describers consider it more an “art” than a “craft” than AD end-users and service providers). AD end-users and service providers have a very similar position: their perspective on the work of the audio describer resembles the view audio describers have of themselves, and it demonstrates a good degree of awareness of (and attention for) this specific profession on the part of stakeholders.

As pointed out by a service provider, an audio describer “must at first have the natural talent for strong creative writing, good vocabulary and excellent grammar. AD is a niche however, so these skills can be developed ‘on the job’ to meet the very specific demands of AD; such as pacing, timings, choosing information to sacrifice, how to be concise and other elements. I also stated ‘author’ because I think strong AD resembles good storytelling.”

	Audio describers	AD end-users	Service providers
definitely an “art”	3 %	4%	6%
more of an “art” than a “craft”	17%	5%	0%
it is a bit of both	57%	57%	66%
more of a “craft” than an “art”	18%	23%	22%
definitely a “craft”	3%	8%	6%
I don’t know	2%	3%	0%

Table 26. Percentage of answers to the question *In your opinion, is the work of the audio describer an “art” (an innate talent that can be refined on the job) or a “craft” (an activity you learn, the result of specialized training)?*, divided by type of respondent category

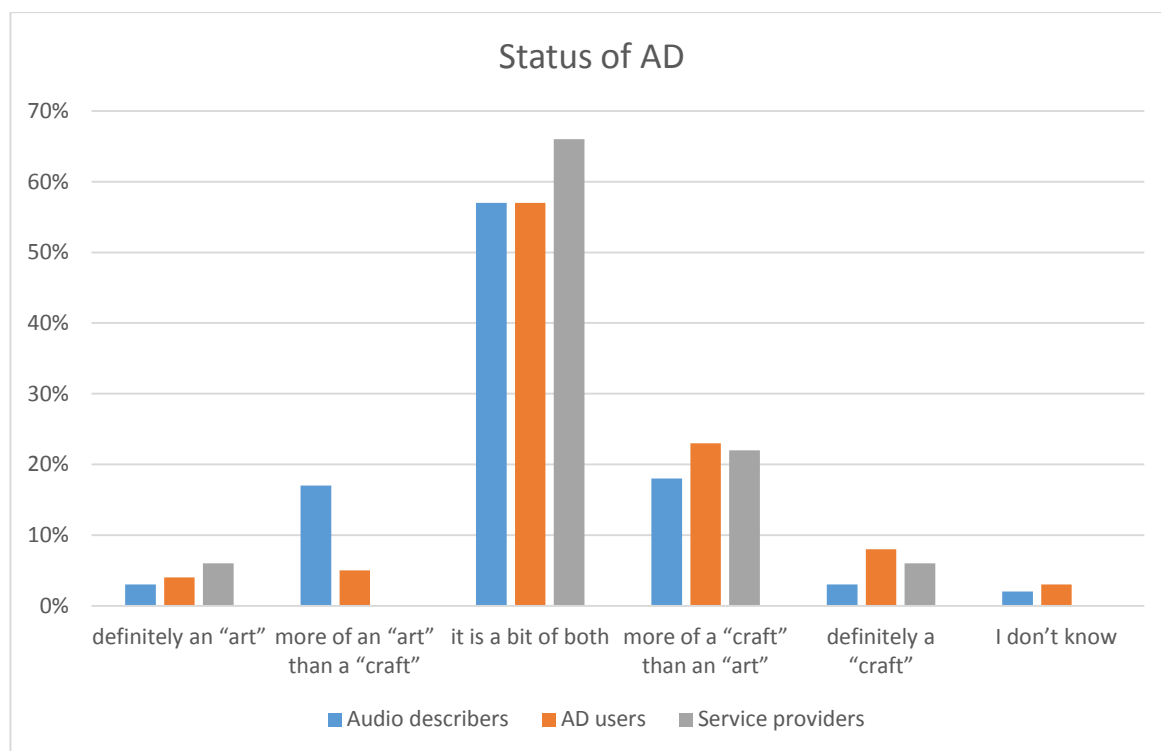


Figure 10. Stance of respondents re. the status of AD (art or craft?)

On the same lines, we asked **which professional figure a describer most closely resembles**. Results are summed up in Table 27 and illustrated visually in Figure 11.

Most professional audio describers agree the audio describer resembles an audiovisual translator (35%), a scriptwriter (31%) or an author (18%), thus emphasising his/her affinity with the language and the writing world – only 1 respondent sees the audio describer as an artist, which confirms what was claimed above. So, audio description professionals seem to see themselves as practical “workers of language”. This suggests indirectly that they see the profession as something that needs to be learned via training. Service providers share a very similar view. AD end-users on the other hand have a slightly different stance and they see audio describers mainly as audiovisual translators (43%), with a good percentage of respondents considering them also presenter-commentators (24%). End-users therefore see the translational and the technical aspect of the AD profession as very relevant, as indicated by the emphasis on the importance of delivery in AD.

	Audio describers	AD end-users	Service providers
Audiovisual translator	35%	43%	33%
Scriptwriter	31%	13%	28%
Author	18%	3%	11%
Artist	2%	1%	5%
Technician	-	3%	-
Actor	-	7%	-
Presenter - commentator	5%	24%	11%
Other	9%	6%	11%

Table 27. Percentage of answers to the question *In your opinion, which professional figure does a describer most closely resemble?*, divided by type of respondent category.

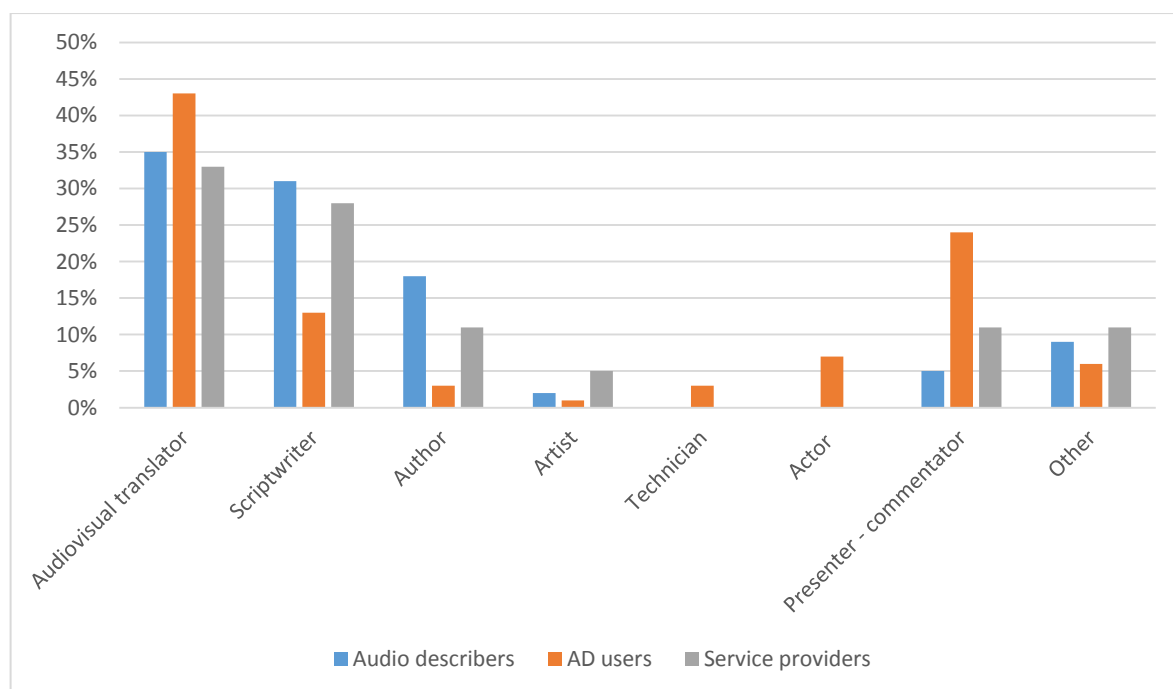


Figure 11. Stance of the respondents on the professional figure that most resembles an audio describer

Comments provided in the space at the end of the questionnaire section show that the audio describer is seen generally as a combination of different professional figures: the questionnaire did not allow respondents to select multiple answers in this case. Respondents therefore found it difficult to choose only one item from the list. This indicates the complexity of the AD professional figure and the need for him/her to develop several different skills rather than being able to focus on one. This also suggests that a good course will highlight the need to be willing to strengthen one's knowledge in different fields.

Table 28 below shows the **stance** of audio describers (N = 65), AD end-users (N = 100) and service providers (N = 18) **on the status and the work of the audio describer**. Results show that:

- Respondents do not seem to have a clear idea regarding the prestige of the AD profession even though there is a slight tendency of all respondent categories to see it as prestigious – the percentage of undecided respondents and that of respondents disagreeing or strongly disagreeing should be noticed, too;
- Interestingly, respondents seem to be again on the same lines in thinking that the AD profession is not well known by the general public – which suggests that it should be promoted and given more value and visibility. The difficulties encountered in accepting this as a profession might well come from the fact that too many people still do not know the profession and its importance. On the other hand, data show that most respondents think that the work of the audio describer is well known in the inner circle, as expected;
- As far as stress involved in AD work, as pointed out by one of the service providers, the type of AD determines the level of stress the describer undergoes: “it makes a difference whether you are doing live AD or not (e.g. live AD is a bit more stressful than doing pre-recorded AD)”. That said, data show that the majority of audio describers (57%) are undecided or think this is not a stressful activity vs. 46% considering it stressful;
- The majority of respondents from all three categories agree the work of the audio describer is demanding;
- A very low percentage of respondents in general think that AD is well paid; most (especially AD end-users) are undecided or agree (especially service providers) it is not a well-paid profession;
- That all respondents have a similar stance when it comes to rating a number of features of the work of audio describers such as creative and satisfying: not only do professionals like their job, but both end-users and service providers know it is a creative and a satisfying job for most professionals;
- Almost all the sample agrees on the social usefulness of AD, as expected.

Overall, these results show that that AD end-users are not always aware of how description is created, and it suggests that more dissemination is needed to change this level of awareness.

	1 strongly disagree			2 disagree			3 undecided			4 agree			5 strongly agree		
	AD	U	SP	AD	U	SP	AD	U	SP	AD	U	SP	AD	U	SP
Prestigious	6	7	0	22	19	22	35	24	22	28	37	39	9	13	17
Well known by the general public	49	48	39	39	31	56	6	11	0	3	6	6	3	4	0
Well known by blind end-users	2	3	6	15	14	22	22	13	11	45	45	50	17	25	11
Stressful	3	7	0	28	10	33	26	45	44	38	30	17	5	8	6
Demanding	2	3	0	2	7	11	14	26	11	49	40	72	34	24	6
Well paid	26	13	6	34	14	39	26	65	44	14	7	11	0	1	0
Satisfying	3	3	0	0	2	0	3	32	6	46	46	61	48	17	33
Creative	0	7	0	5	5	6	2	8	6	35	49	44	58	31	44
Socially useful	1	2	0	5	1	0	5	3	11	20	19	17	69	75	72

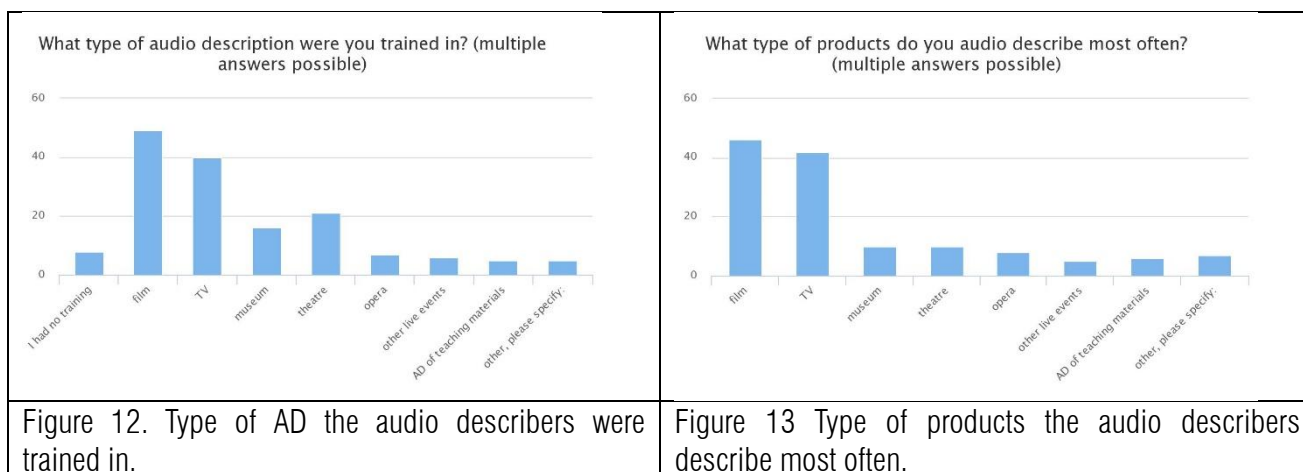
Table 28. Percentage of responses to the question *How would you rate the following statements on a 1 to 5 scale (1 – strongly disagree; 2– disagree; 3 – undecided; 4 – agree; 5 – strongly agree)?* according to audio describers (AD), AD end-users (U), and service providers (SP)

Besides helping us to gain a picture on the status of the audio describers, the questionnaire contributed to offering a wealth of data on the profile of audio describers. These include their education and training, background and working practices as well as their origins and interaction with the internal and the external world – aspects that are tackled in the paragraphs below and that contribute to giving us a more comprehensive picture of this professional category.

3.4.1 Training

As far as **training** is concerned, the survey data show that nearly all respondents had somehow been trained (only 8 had no training at all), and they specialized in at least one AD type. In particular, most audio describers specialized in film (75%) and TV AD (62%), whereas other AD types appear to be less taught or chosen during training (museum: 25%, theatre: 32%, opera: 11%, other live events: 9%, teaching materials: 8%, and other, e.g. social events: 8%). A hypothesis could be that training in AD types other than film and TV is not good or easy enough given the lack of specific materials. Film and TV AD are also the products that are described most often (respectively 71% and 65%), followed by museum (15%), theatre (15%), opera (12%), other live events (8%), teaching materials (9%) and other (11%, including e.g. illustrated books, dance performances, art exhibitions, folk events, promotional and/or (web) videos for public organizations, photos (in exhibitions) and conferences)(Figure 12 and 13).

Our results confirm the results of IO1 (ADLAB PRO 2017, Chmiel and Mazur 2017) showing that also the majority of AD teaching concerns film AD (81%) – which is followed by museum AD (55%), theatre AD (40%), other live events (30%), AD of visuals in teaching materials (20%), AD for the opera (17%) (ADLAB PRO 2017: 7). As further highlighted by the IO1 report, this is also in line with the results of the first ADLAB project, which showed that television is the area in which AD is most appreciated by the target audience (ADLAB 2012).



As opposed to what happens in other fields (e.g. dubbing, where dubbing translators claim that training is not needed for the profession because practice and experience are the determining factors in becoming a good adapter; Pavesi and Perego 2006, 2008a, 2008b), **in the AD area training seems to be much more valued** and also more systematic than expected – at least in the sampled group.

In general, it is supposed to be easier and more convenient for an audio describer to audio describe products they are specialized in. However, this might be possible at times, with a possible disruptive effect on the quality of the AD script. More than half of our respondents (37 vs. 28) have always accepted all audio description jobs that have been offered to them, even if they fell outside their AD specialization. This can be ascribed to the scarcity of AD work and the necessity to audio describe when there is the possibility to do so. It could also be ascribed to the need not to find themselves out of the loop, or it could be ascribed to the wish to practice also in sectors that fall outside one’s specialization, in order to learn and expand one’s competence. Furthermore, AD is a relatively new field and therefore pioneers first exploring different modes of AD irrespective of their specialization can justify this trend. On the other hand, the fact that some (43%) decided to be selective can indicate that there are a number of professionals who can do so because their prestige allows them to refuse some job proposals, or can (have to?) do so because they have other jobs.

3.4.2 Working practice

A further area of investigation regards the preferred working practice of audio describers. According to our data, audio describers **mainly work alone** (vs. in a team) (Table 29) – which makes audio description a solitary activity. This seems to be a characterizing feature of AVT in general (see Pavesi and Perego 2006, 2008a, 2008b for dubbing). Even though our questionnaire does not enable us to know the reason for this situation, we hypothesize that the advent of new technologies and software has made it possible to carry out most types of AVT on a computer, with no need to go to a specific working place. Although this might seem irrelevant, in the end it can have an impact on the way AD scripts are written and on their ultimate effectiveness.

Besides mostly writing AD scripts alone, audio describers do **not seem to cooperate much with people who are vision impaired during the AD scripting process** (Table 30), with 44% claiming that they rarely (26%) or never (18%) do so. 17% of the respondents always do so and another 17% do so often, while 22% do so sometimes. **This could suggest that most professionals do not prioritize interaction with people who are vision impaired during the process of AD writing, or that they find it difficult (time- wise or economically) to get in touch and cooperate with them** (cf. the following anonymous comment: “It would be useful and

interesting to interact with persons with visual impairments to check that one is on the right track”). This highlights a very serious weakness in the link between stakeholders.

When you write audio descriptions, do you work alone or in a team?

	Count	Percentage	
Always alone	18	27.69%	<div></div>
Mainly alone	30	46.15%	<div></div>
Sometimes alone and sometimes in a team	12	18.46%	<div></div>
Mainly in a team	4	6.15%	<div></div>
Always in a team	1	1.54%	<div></div>

Table 29. Frequency with which audio describers work alone or in a team

How often do you cooperate with persons with visual impairments when preparing audio descriptions?

	Count	Percentage	
always	11	16.92%	<div></div>
often	11	16.92%	<div></div>
sometimes	14	21.54%	<div></div>
rarely	17	26.15%	<div></div>
never	12	18.46%	<div></div>

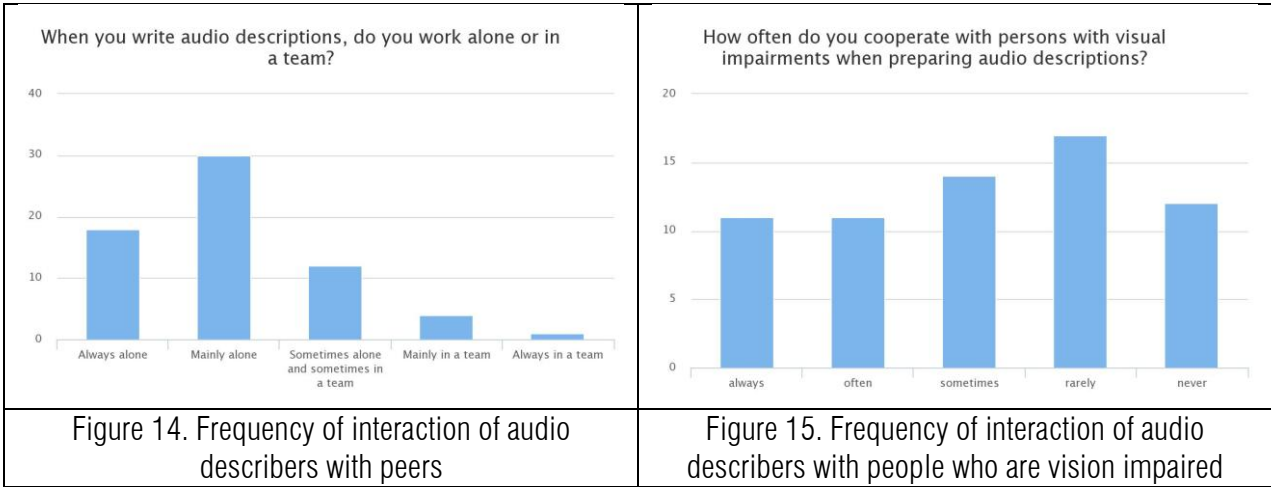
Table 30. Frequency of cooperation of audio describers with persons with visual impairments

However, teamwork where at least one person who is visually impaired is involved is a reality at least in some established companies (e.g. Bayerische Rundfunk, UK National Theatre, VocalEyes) where quality is a main concern and best practices are implemented (Fryer 2016, forthcoming; Perego and Benecke 2014). In view of future training and course design, this cooperation should be emphasised as crucial, as also suggested in the IO1 report: “the involvement of people who are vision impaired in the process of creating and teaching AD may enrich it and improve the quality of the final product”(ADLAB PRO 2017: 6).

Prospective AD writers should make sure they can rely on people who are vision impaired for a revision of their AD script, and therefore contact with end-users and stakeholders should be encouraged and improved. This could be done **creating stronger links between blind associations as well as service providers and audio describers**, e.g. with each country creating a pool of potential blind revisers (selected upon defined criteria and trained in AD) to be contacted via email for at least a consultation.

In terms of the cooperation of AD professionals with people who are vision impaired, our results disconfirm the results obtained in the IO1 report. According to the IO1 report, in the case of AD training environments, cooperation with people who are vision impaired during teaching is quite common among the respondents, with only less than one third claiming that they rarely (21%) or never (6%) cooperate with persons with visual

impairments when teaching audio description. 22% of the respondents always do so, 23% of the respondents do so often and a similar percentage (23%) do so sometimes (ADLAB PRO 2017: 5-6).



3.4.3 Interaction with peers

Nearly half of the audio describers (42%) ask the opinion of other audio describers to overcome specific AD problems only sometimes (with 23% asking it often and 9% always). Only 26% never or rarely feel the need to talk to their peers. This indicates a humble approach to the process, **the high value given to the opinion of peers, an eagerness to share solutions**, and perhaps a way of overcoming the solitary nature of AD work. Audio describers like to talk among themselves (which is also confirmed by their eagerness to participate in conferences and workshops to get updated, cf. § 2.9).

As a consequence, most (39%) feel that their work is influenced by the solutions found in other audio descriptions *quite a lot* to *a lot*, and nearly half (43%) *somewhat*. This implies that audio describers do share directly strategies or language choices, and tend to follow the advice of their peers. This can be ascribed to the lack of training material or guidelines that have characterized the previous decades: the most effective way of learning was and still is by identifying best practices. As a consequence, we can assume that the AD scripts produced by different audio describers might somehow be homogeneous or at least share some features.

3.4.4 Most practiced AD production stages

Because the AD profession is not yet official and in some cases not recognized, it is still unclear which areas and **stages of the AD production process audio describers have experience with**, or should have experience with. According to our sample (who could provide multiple answers to the question), writing and/or revising the AD script is the most practiced process (100% of respondents ticked this answer) and therefore the one that needs to be focused on in training, especially because AD quality depends greatly on this ability. Voicing the AD (66%) and controlling the quality of the final product (in terms of checking the script or the recording, or both) (46%) follow suit, which suggests that a substantial number of audio describers are also voice talents (in Poland, for instance, voice talents are used extensively, probably due to our voice-over tradition; Mazur, September 2017, personal communication) and they are responsible for the final quality checks on the product. All in all, these results could be country-specific (analysis of the results by country,

planned for the future, could give interesting results) or may vary according to AD type – film/television vs. live AD. We know for instance that this may be changing at VRT in Flanders for financial reasons, and people are invited to do as much as they can (Remael, September 2017, personal communication).

On the other hand, assisting the recording of the AD with voice talents (25%) and mixing the AD with the original soundtrack (22%) seem to be processes often ascribed to specific personnel with technical competences rather than to audio describers. This shows that **there is a clear division of work between audio describers and (sound) technicians in most environments. In fact, the competences involved in the two processes are diverse and not necessarily the prerogative of the same professional figure.**⁴ Only in the case of people with double competence, e.g. audio describers who are also service providers, is it common to find the same person both producing the AD script and dealing with technical aspects. This is confirmed by the comment of a Dutch respondent who claimed s/he is an audio describer and service provider, which means s/he also voices the ADs. Finally, as indicated in one of the open confidential comments, there is a further case when a single person can deal with all the production stages: “I have worked at the whole process of AD production, from the drafting of the text to the recording. This was possible thanks to a software which automatizes the vocalizing of the AD by using synthetic voices.” Overall, although automated voicing and audio editing can enhance the number of ADs produced, writing, voicing and audio editing are best performed by trained and experienced human beings.

The translation of AD scripts is another under experienced process in our sample (12%), suggesting that ADs are preferably drafted from scratch rather than translated from other languages. The translation of AD has been and still is a debated issue both in professional and in academic areas (see e.g. Jankowska 2015; López Vera 2006; Marchesi 2014; Roni 2011). Translating AD seems to be a “tempting alternative strategy for creating audio description scripts in those countries where audio description is still scarce” (Jankowska 2015). Some scholars claim that translating ADs is not an effective process⁵, or in fact it is challenging: “[linguistic] nuances might present challenges for the translation of the AD as a strategy for creating AD scripts, as advocated by Jankowska (2015) and implemented by some AD companies.” (Fryer, 2016: 59). Other scholars, on the other hand, proved that translation of audio description scripts actually is not only possible, but also beneficial when it comes to time consumption, costs and quality of audio description, but also in terms of the satisfactory response of the audience (Jankowska 2015, who conducted a study in Poland, AD translated from English into Polish). See also Marchesi 2014, who worked with the language pair English > Italian, and showed that the adjustments required in the process of translating a film AD still make it effective, irrespective of the few disadvantages the translator has to deal with. What is sure is that more research is required in this area, especially because if AD is translated for subtitling countries it has to be supplemented with audio subtitling.

Only one respondent from the sample indicated the use of machine translation with post-editing, showing that this activity is not yet part of everyday practice.

⁴ “In my experience, I have found that AD for media involves three primary disciplines—writing description, voicing description, audio editing—and that it’s the extremely rare individual who can demonstrate excellence in all three areas. Similarly, I have found that the demonstration of excellence as writers *and* as voice talents is also a rarity. This seems supported by the observation later in the report that service providers find that “mixing AD with original sound” is difficult or the most difficult part of the overall process” (Joel Snyder, October 2017, personal communication).

⁵ “[...] in my own experience having produced description in six languages [...] AD translation from English to another language is far less efficient and results in a product that is of low quality as compared to AD developed in the target language (Joel Snyder, October 2017, personal communication)

Below, the most practiced AD production stages ordered from the most to the least experienced from audio describers:

1. Writing and/or revising the AD script	100%
2. Voicing the AD	65%
3. Quality control of the final product	46%
4. Assisting the recording of the AD with voice talents	25%
5. Mixing the AD with the original soundtrack	22%
6. Translating AD scripts	12%
7. Other	3%
8. Using machine translation with post-editing	2%

At this stage, it is interesting to shed light on the perspective of service providers of the most practiced stages of AD production. Irrespective of the hours of service offered, data show that the **stages of the production process each company has experience with** are several and no one stands out or is significantly more practiced than the others. Writing and/or revising the AD script and Quality control of the final product (e.g. checking the script or recording or both) are performed by nearly all respondents, while Using machine translation with post-editing does not form part of the production stages of the respondents. Overall, data show that service providers deal with most if not all aspects of AD production, including technical aspects. Performing live audio descriptions, but also management in the form of selection of programming, liaison with blind charities and associations, and strategic visions are further aspect dealt with in some of the AD companies that responded to the questionnaire – as indicated in the space provided at the end of the section.

1. Writing and/or revising the AD script	78%
2. Quality control of the final product	67%
3. Voicing the AD	50%
4. Mixing the AD with the original soundtrack	50%
5. Assisting at recording the AD with voice talents	44%
6. Translating AD scripts	39%
7. Other, please specify:	22%
8. Using machine translation with post-editing	-

Only one service provider out of 18 is not aware of the **existence of audio description guidelines**. Nearly all know of the existence of different types of guidelines. Some service providers (35%) created their own and/or rely on in-house guidelines (47%). This highlights the importance given by service providers to recommendations and their personal involvement and interest in how the AD process works.

If we compare the most practiced stages of the production process according to audio describers and service providers (Table 31), we can observe that both categories have most experience with the process of writing and/or revising the AD, and least experience with using machine translation with post editing. Providers have more experience in the most technical processes such as mixing the AD, assisting with the recording of the AD, and even in translating AD scripts. Describers, on the other hand, have most experience in writing the AD, voicing the AD and taking care of the quality control of the final product, but, overall, they have little experience in all the other processes. We can also observe that providers are more involved than describers in the process of quality control of the final product.

A comparison with the answers of service providers shows that both categories of respondents share similar experiences:

Audio describers	Service providers
1. Writing and/or revising the AD script 100%	1. Writing and/or revising the AD script 78%
2. Voicing the AD 65%	2. Quality control of the final product 67%
3. Quality control of the final product 46%	3. Voicing the AD 50%
4. Assisting the recording of the AD with voice talents 25%	4. Mixing the AD with the original soundtrack 50%
5. Mixing the AD with the original soundtrack 22%	5. Assisting at recording the AD with voice talents 44%
6. Translating AD scripts 12%	6. Translating AD scripts 39%
7. Other 3%	7. Other 22%
8. Using machine translation with post-editing 2%	8. Using machine translation with post-editing -

Table 31. Most practiced AD production stages according to audio describers and service providers

3.4.5 Origins of the audio describers

Most audio describers started working in a different setting and ended up working in the AD world after experiencing different professional environments. In fact, only 2 respondents from our sample did not work in another profession before becoming audio describers. Results show that audio describers coming from a different working environment than AD generally come from the AVT world and are former audiovisual translators (e.g. subtitlers, dubbing translators, etc.). In general, however, they **come from professional fields where the use of language, voice, and writing skills is central**, as illustrated in the list below, even though some particular cases can be noted (cf. “other” – 30% – with people coming from the hotel system, from archeology, commerce and even information management):

- ☐ Audiovisual translator 22%
- ☐ Teacher 10%
- ☐ Actor 10%
- ☐ Translator 8%
- ☐ Journalist 6%
- ☐ Radio/TV commentator 5%
- ☐ Presenter 5%
- ☐ Writer 3%
- ☐ TV producer 2%
- ☐ Other 30%

A part from the above mentioned exceptions, most of those who come from other fields (30%) come from fields where language is very relevant (cf. the case of editors, publicists and writers, but also of the educational designer). Or they come from the media sector (writer, announcer, producer and director of films and TV; writer, presenter, radio/TV presenter; amateur actor, radio collaborator; television producer; cinema/television translator, writer, editor; film cutting and subtitling). This list further suggests that some performed more than one activity in the media world, which is also the case in other professional fields, cf. e.g.:

- teacher, translator, corrector, subtitler;
- translator, writer, teacher, historian;
- speech to text interpreter, subtitler, voice actor, teacher;
- cinema/television translator, writer, dubber.

Their **introduction into the AD professional environment** followed varied paths (Table 32). Most respondents attended training, either in the form of specialized courses on AD (32%), or courses on AVT (14%). Although some AD writers created their own company (17%), or were selected based on their CV or showreel/portfolio (17%), a good number (26%) started working because someone in the field (family (3%) or acquaintance (23%)) helped them enter this profession. This shows the importance of interpersonal relations for entering the job also in the AD world (the role of family as a means for introducing audio describers into the professional world is instead negligible; cf. Pavesi and Perego 2006, 2008a, 2008b where instead family plays a major role in introducing dialogue writers into the profession). It could also be due to the fact the describing is a new profession with few established routes of entry. In either case, this could contribute to the creation of a closed community of AD writers who rarely interact.

Currently, only 20% of the respondents work as audio describers full time. Most have other professions, including:

- | | |
|---|--|
| - editor | - phd researcher |
| - I deal with both audio description and subtitles for the deaf and hard of hearing | - teacher, filmmaker |
| - translator | - teaching |
| - work by contract | - actor |
| - "theatrologist" | - ad, adapting dialogues of films series, cinema and tv |
| - radio announcer, speech tutor, music editor (author of radio programme) | - retired/part time voluntary work |
| - subtitling and dubbing | - coordinator of diversity policy public broadcaster, formerly journalist and writer |
| - retired | - mainly educational voice work |
| - translator, part time lecturer | - director of a non-profit organization |
| - teacher | - creative manager of a nonprofit organization |
| - subtitler (of pre-recorded material and live), translator | - audio describer but on a freelance basis |
| - press officer | - actor |
| - teacher, writer | - translator, proofreader and subtitler |
| - english teacher, audiovisual translator | - translator |
| - subtitler (N=5) | - musician |
| - executive producer | - curator museum |
| - educational designer | - teaching creative writing |
| - writing, presenting events, ... | - as listed above |
| - I work in hotels and at the same time I am trying to star working as a radio speaker. | - speech to text interpreter, subtitler, voice actor, teacher |
| - promo producer | - assistant to blind professional |
| - audiovisual translator (N = 3) | |

20% followed different or mixed paths, and as illustrated in some of the comments, they were recruited because they were already expert in AVT or linguistics: "While I was working as a subtitler for a firm, they needed an audio describer. I had no training, so another worker who had been trained, trained me. Later on I trained in London thanks to the PhD"; "I worked as a subtitler and they offered me a test to start an AD Project, because I had training as a linguist". Interestingly, someone got the job in a more "traditional" way, answering an advert in a newspaper, or became an audio describer as a consequence of intense contact with the target audience.

How did you start working as an audio describer? (multiple answers possible)

	Count	Percentage	
After a specialized course on AD	21	32.31%	<div></div>
After a course on audiovisual translation	9	13.85%	<div></div>
After an internship in an AD company	1	1.54%	<div></div>
Someone working in the field (acquaintance) helped me enter this profession	15	23.08%	<div></div>
Someone working in the field (family) helped me enter this profession	2	3.08%	<div></div>
I created my own company	11	16.92%	<div></div>
I was selected based on my CV or showreel/portfolio	11	16.92%	<div></div>
Other, please specify:	13	20.00%	<div></div>
	65		

Table 32. How audio describers started working in the field.

3.4.6 Audio describers and guidelines

Almost all describers (92%) are aware of the existence of **AD guidelines**, be they national, in-house or generated in countries different from the respondent's; some describers (28%) drafted their own guidelines and follow those. This suggests that most professionals have a **great awareness of the AD process and/or find it important to follow some kind of recommendation**. The interest in guidelines also suggests that they are an important reference point for audio describers. This indicates that guidelines should be presented and used in training as part of a comprehensive and effective course.

3.4.7 Educational background and AD training

The educational background of audio describers is quite varied but it generally belongs to the field of humanities and arts, with a majority of professionals having received education in language and linguistics (40%) or literature (42%). Translation (34%) as well as film and TV studies (28%) are other preferred areas of provenance followed by journalism and media studies (17%). These results are not surprising, since excellent knowledge of the mother tongue along with excellent writing skills are necessary to become an excellent audio describer, and education in the field of translation and media is also perfect to enter the profession. Other educational areas include theatre studies (15%), acting school (17%), arts and/or museum studies (14%) and psychology (8%). As mentioned earlier in this report, museum and theatre are a little under represented forms of AD, especially in some countries (see also ADLAB 2012). These AD types however are best drafted by people with a specific background, able to deal with the required specialized

lexicon. These professionals may well come from a specialized background, to which they need to add specific AVT (or just AD) skills.

Only 2% of the audio describers come from Science and 2% from computer science and IT. 26% come instead from other related (including screenwriting, history and archeology, audiovisual communication, dubbing, philosophy, education and social sciences) or unrelated (industrial engineering, graphic designer, political science and music) educational backgrounds.

What is your educational background? (multiple answers possible)

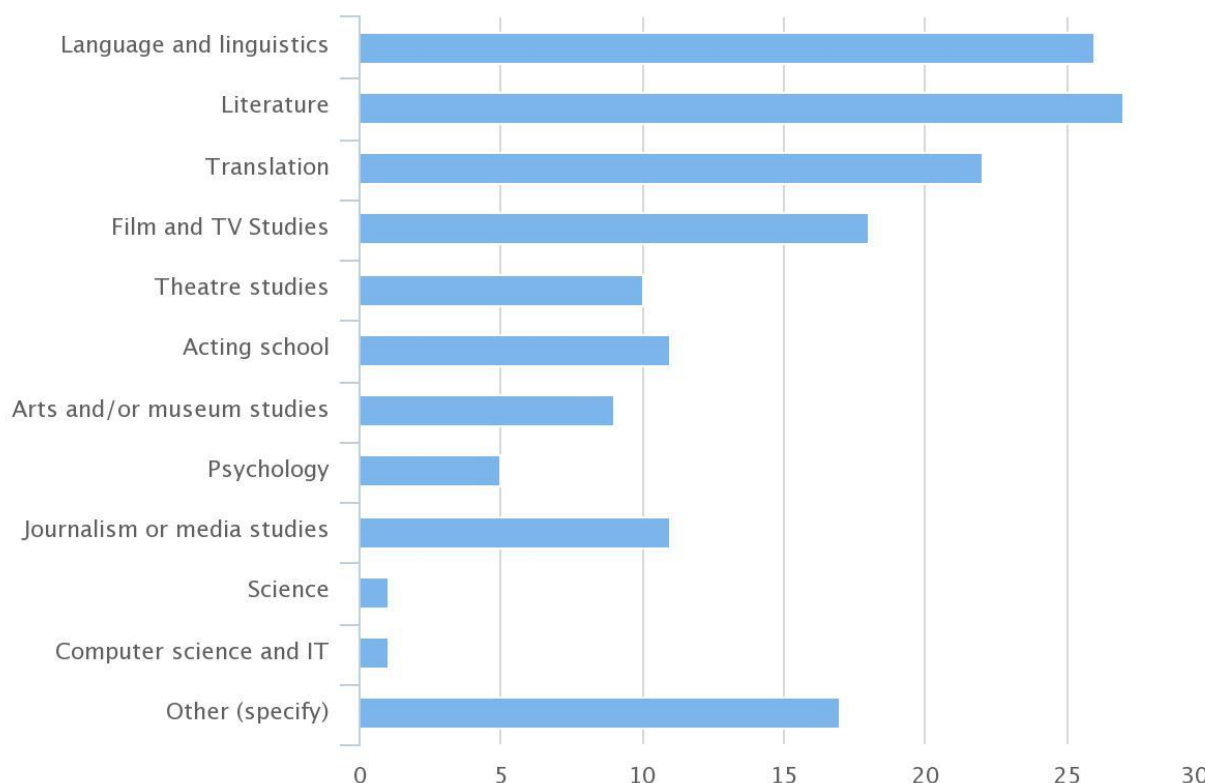


Figure 16. Educational background of the audio describers

3.4.8 Forms of training received

Besides coming from language related areas of study, overall, the majority of respondents received specific **AD training** (75%). Training was received in several forms, including workshops (37%), in-house training (conducted at a company/institution, etc.) (46%), university courses (24%), vocational courses (13%), one-to-one instruction (17%) and finally internship (6%). Other forms of training included e.g. specific AVT courses with lectures on AD, or self-training, e.g. work done to complete a PhD thesis.

These data highlight the fact that companies tend not to offer potential audio describer employees the opportunity to work at their firm for a fixed, limited period of time and therefore to learn from experienced personnel (which might be partially ascribed to the fact that audio describers produce AD scripts at home),

but they prefer to offer some kind of formal instruction to people who are already employed (in-house training). Training is therefore obtained independently, outside the companies.

A **certificate** was obtained after training in half the cases ($N = 46$), but overall only 15% of the respondents were asked to show a training certificate to obtain the job. This indicates that official training is not yet required by companies or service providers, who might select their internal personnel based on other criteria (it would be interesting to know which).

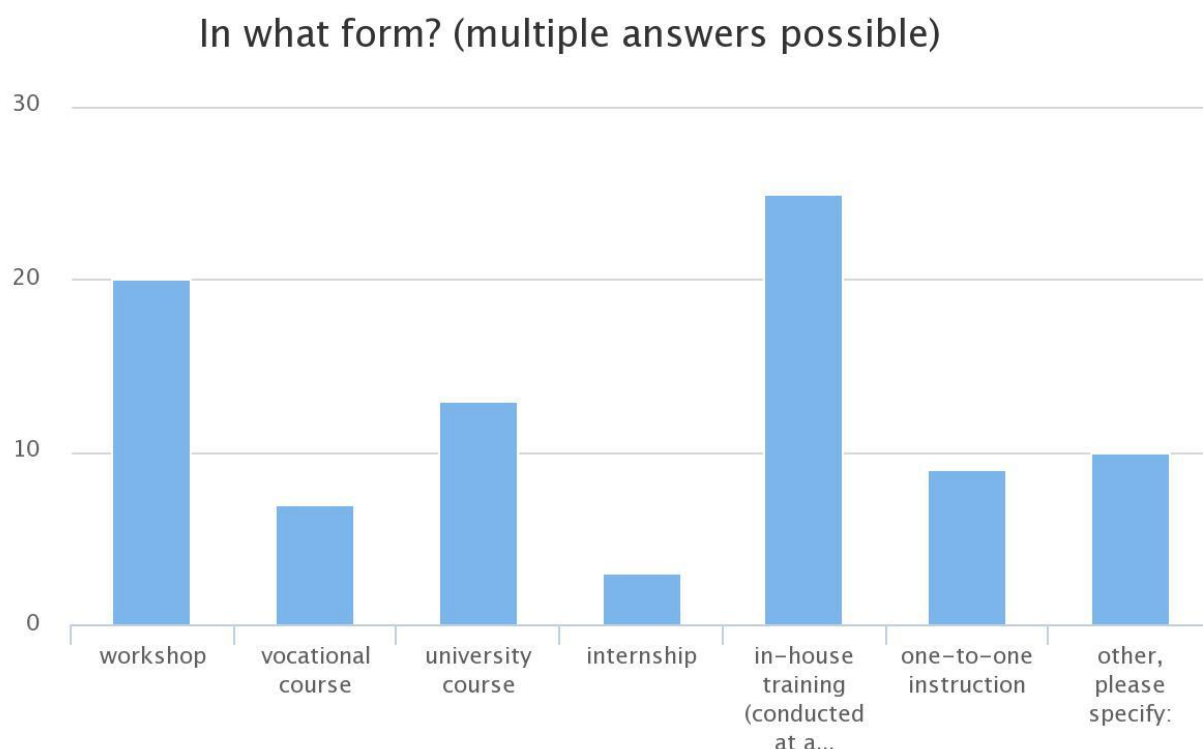


Figure 17. Forms of training received by audio describers

3.4.9 Ways of improving competence

In spite of the scant interest of service providers for official training, **audio describers confirm their personal interest in the discipline and especially in self-improvement** (only 8% of the sample declared that they were currently doing nothing to improve their skills). There is not a preferred way to continue to improve skills and competences. Experience in the field is considered important by 37% of the respondents – and indeed, it really is for most if not all forms of AVT. However, audio describers are keen on studying existing material (guidelines, academic articles, books on AD, etc.) (52%) and participating in conferences and workshops (55%), as well as analyzing existing ADs (focusing on the solutions adopted by colleagues) (54%) and doing research (e.g. gathering information on a product, discussion with film/theatre directors/producers or with museum staff and curators, etc.).

In-house training (conducted at a company/institution, etc.) (25%) is not very frequent – and therefore the ADLAB PRO training materials could be a good substitute for that, and should be disseminated to companies and stakeholders.

Other forms of self-improvement include getting feedback from blind persons, reading materials on the psychology of film and text reception, teaching AD classes.

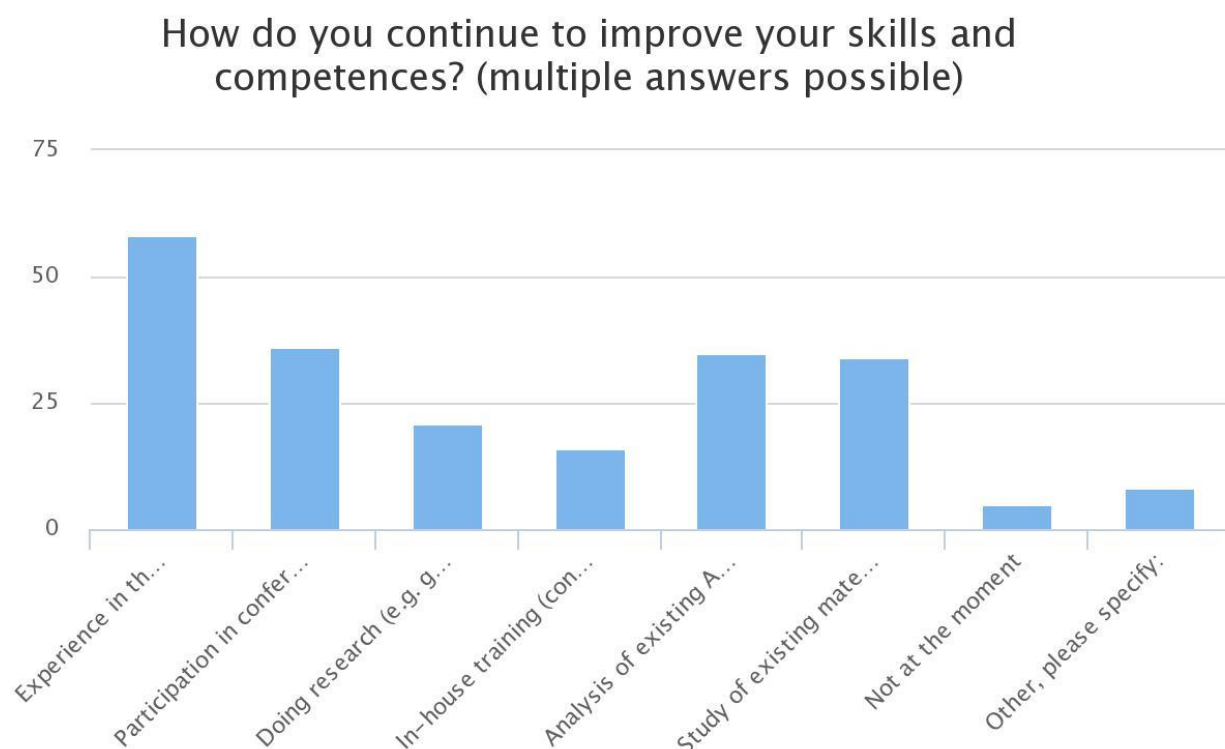


Figure 18. Ways of improving skills and competences

These data suggest that audio describers like self-training and are very flexible in the way they choose to get updates. Interestingly, they choose public situations (conferences and workshops) where they can also meet other colleagues or scholars dealing with AD. This might make up for their solitary work environment, one that does not enable them to interact constantly. Audio describers are eager to exploit most of the existing material that can offer useful input on the AD process. This is encouraging and seems to be a good predictor of the future use of the ADLAB PRO materials.

A reason for this interest is also connected to the fact that nearly half of the respondents (52%) have taught AD at least once in their lives. As shown in the IO1 report (ADLAB PRO 2017), AD teachers and audio describers are often the same person: “AD is taught predominantly by people who are experts on teaching (academic teachers), have practical experience in AD creation (audio describers) and are interested in AD also from a theoretical point of view (researchers). This ties in nicely with the concept of a practisearcher” (ADLAB PRO 2017: 5).

It must not be forgotten that currently, little is known about the professional category of audio describers and their professional circle, in spite of the potential sociolinguistic impact this can have on the end-users of AD scripts. Audio describers are responsible for the texts that make visual products accessible to people who are vision impaired. AD scripts can have a considerable impact on language acquisition both for blind and for sighted end-users of ADs, therefore, the quality of the AD will have an effect on the quality of the acquisitional process and on the quality of the type of language acquired. This is crucial because ADs can be used successfully with several types of disadvantaged end-users (older adults, people with learning difficulties, illiterate people, immigrants, language learners, etc.) besides people who are vision impaired (ADP, 2009: 3,5; AENOR, 2005, in Rai et al., 2010: 14-15; Dosch and Benecke, 2004 in Rai et al., 2010: 53; Morrisett and Gonant, 2008: 1 in Rai et al. 2010; Ofcom, 2010: 9, 13; Remael & Vercauteren, 2011: 1; Snyder, 2006).

4. CONCLUSIONS

The primary objective of IO2 was to pinpoint the necessary skills needed to train professional audio describers, in order to later outline the profile of the AD professional and offer an AD training toolkit or a “template” (the **Matrix**) of skills. This objective was pursued setting up a questionnaire that enabled us to distil a series of skills that appear to be necessary to train professional audio describers. Data show that according to professionals the core competences necessary to become a professional audio describer are primarily textual and linguistic skills as well as soft skills. The same stance seems to be shared by end-users, who declared explicitly their appreciation of AD aspects that have to do with the way language is used to deliver information. End-users favour a clear coherent and engaging AD narrative that helps them follow and enjoy the product thanks to simple syntax and well-chosen comprehensible vocabulary. On the other hand, technical aspects of AD are seen differently by end-users and professionals. In fact, the Matrix shows that, overall, technical skills (in particular synchronization (i.e. timing), a proper mix of AD with original sound and the vocal skills of the describer) are not regarded as fundamental by professionals even though end-users find them very important.

The wealth of data that emerged from IO2 will contribute to the construction of a theory-driven course framework (cf. aims of IO3), and can be used to start finer investigations on several aspects linked to the world of AD and the professionals populating it. Besides offering results on the core skills that a good audio describer should develop, IO2 brought to the surface a number of aspects of the status of this professional figure that need further investigation but that can help us understand what is needed in a comprehensive training course, based on the real needs and way of working of this professional category.

In spite of the importance of the data gathered through the questionnaire, we are aware of the limitations of the survey and of the study. Results necessarily cover the European perspective – and mostly the perspective of the countries directly involved in the project. This needs to be considered when using IO2 data, and it also highlights the difficulty of recruiting respondents even when a structured consortium works cross-nationally and exploits wide academic and professional networks. Furthermore, results are not interpreted through a solid theoretical framework. This is linked to the wider picture IO2 belongs to: the following output (IO3) will have the critical task of drawing on findings from very specific fields related to didactics (e.g. pedagogy, cognitive psychology, translator training, curriculum design, assessment, etc.) in order to start designing an AD training course.

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APPENDIX I02 QUESTIONNAIRE (IN ENGLISH)





I02: PROFILE DEFINITION | QUESTIONNAIRE

THE QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire is part of the working activities of the European project ADLAB PRO, which is designed to produce training material for the creation of the professional audio describer. Your time and contribution to our research are invaluable, and we would like to thank you for accepting to participate as a respondent.

TERMS OF PARTICIPATION

Please note that completing the questionnaire implies consent. It is important that you know that all of your responses will be strictly confidential and will be encoded in order to keep your anonymity in future publications and presentations. You have the right to abandon the survey at any time without any penalty.

INSTRUCTIONS

Completing the questionnaire should take approximately 20 minutes. The questionnaire is divided into sections. All sections have additional space for you to include comments on anything you consider of importance and which we have not addressed.



SECTION 1: DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

ALL RESPONDENTS

This opening section of the questionnaire includes 8 questions on your demographic profile followed by a text box in which you can write your comments if you wish to do so.

What country do you live in?

[Drop-down menu](#)

What is your mother tongue?

[Drop-down menu](#)

What is your age?

- ☐ 20-30
- ☐ 31-40
- ☐ 41-50
- ☐ 51-60
- ☐ 61-70
- ☐ 71-80

What is your gender?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed? If currently enrolled, highest degree received.

- ☐ No schooling completed
- ☐ Primary
- ☐ Secondary
- ☐ Vocational
- ☐ BA/BSc
- ☐ MA/MSc
- ☐ PhD
- ☐ Other, please specify:
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

How would you describe your sight condition?

- ☐ Fully sighted
- ☐ Partially sighted
- ☐ Totally blind

Do you have a visual memory?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Other/comments

Are you currently?

- ☐ Audio describer
- ☐ AD end-user
- ☐ AD provider

Is there anything you would like to add? (Optional)



SECTION 2: YOUR ACTIVITY AS AN AUDIO DESCRIBER

ONLY FOR AUDIO DESCRIBERS

How long have you been working as an audio describer (in any area of AD, e.g. film, TV, live events)?

- ☐ Less than one year
- ☐ 1-5 years
- ☐ 6-10 years
- ☐ 11-15 years
- ☐ 16-20 years
- ☐ over 20 years

Is your activity as an audio describer (multiple answers possible):

- ☐ Professional work (paid)
- ☐ Semiprofessional work (a small, token payment or payment in kind e.g. tickets)
- ☐ Voluntary work (no payment)

What type of audio description were you trained in? (multiple answers possible)

- ☐ I had no training
- ☐ Film
- ☐ TV
- ☐ museum
- ☐ theatre
- ☐ opera
- ☐ other live events
- ☐ AD of teaching materials
- ☐ other, please specify:

What type of products do you audio describe most often? (multiple answers possible)

- ☐ film
- ☐ TV
- ☐ museum
- ☐ theatre
- ☐ opera
- ☐ other live events
- ☐ AD of teaching materials
- ☐ other, please specify:

How much AD material have you produced in your career?

- ☐ Less than 50 hours
- ☐ 51-150 hours
- ☐ 151-300 hours
- ☐ Over 300 hours
- ☐ Other/comment:

Which of the following stages of the production process do you have experience with? (multiple answers possible)

- ☐ Writing and/or revising the AD script
- ☐ Translating AD scripts
- ☐ Using machine translation with post-editing
- ☐ Voicing the AD
- ☐ Assisting at recording the AD with voice talents
- ☐ Mixing the AD with the original soundtrack
- ☐ Quality control of the final product (e.g. checking the script or recording or both)
- ☐ Other, please specify:

In what language(s) do you write your audio descriptions?

[Drop-down menu](#)

When you write audio descriptions, do you work alone or in a team?

- ☐ Always alone
- ☐ Mainly alone
- ☐ Sometimes alone and sometimes in a team
- ☐ Mainly in a team
- ☐ Always in a team

How often do you cooperate with persons with visual impairments when preparing audio descriptions?

- ☐ always
- ☐ often
- ☐ sometimes
- ☐ rarely
- ☐ never

Is there anything you would like to add? (Optional)

SECTION 3: THE STATUS OF AD AND THE PROFESSIONAL CIRCLE

ONLY FOR AUDIO DESCRIBERS

Did you work in another profession before you became an audio describer?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If yes, what profession?

- ☐ Translator
- ☐ Audiovisual translator (e.g. subtitler, dubbing translator, etc.)
- ☐ Journalist
- ☐ Writer
- ☐ Teacher
- ☐ Radio/TV commentator
- ☐ Presenter
- ☐ Actor
- ☐ TV producer
- ☐ Other, please specify:

Do you currently work as an audio describer full time or do you have other jobs?

- ☐ I work as an audio describer full time
- ☐ I have other jobs (specify)

How did you start working as an audio describer? (multiple answers possible)

- ☐ After a specialized course on AD
- ☐ After a course on audiovisual translation
- ☐ After an internship in an AD company
- ☐ Someone working in the field (acquaintance) helped me enter this profession
- ☐ Someone working in the field (family) helped me enter this profession
- ☐ I created my own company
- ☐ I was selected based on my CV or showreel/portfolio
- ☐ Other, please specify:

How often do you ask the opinion of other audio describers to overcome specific AD problems?

- ☐ very often
- ☐ often
- ☐ sometimes
- ☐ rarely
- ☐ never

How much do the solutions found in other audio descriptions influence your work?

- ☐ A lot
- ☐ Quite a lot
- ☐ Somewhat
- ☐ Very little
- ☐ Not at all

Are you aware of the existence of audio description guidelines?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If so, what type of guidelines are they? (multiple answers possible)

- ☐ National guidelines
- ☐ In-house guidelines
- ☐ Guidelines from other countries
- ☐ Guidelines I created
- ☐ I don't know

Have you always accepted all audio description jobs that have been offered to you, even if they fall outside your AD specialization?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Do you have enough time to satisfactorily audio describe the products that are commissioned to you?

- ☐ always
- ☐ often
- ☐ sometimes
- ☐ rarely
- ☐ never

In your opinion, is the work of the audio describer an “art” (an innate talent that can be refined on the job) or a “craft” (an activity you learn, the result of specialized training)?

- ☐ definitely an “art”
- ☐ more of an “art” than a “craft”
- ☐ it is a bit of both
- ☐ more of a “craft” than an “art”
- ☐ definitely a “craft”
- ☐ I don't know

How would you rate the following statements on a 1 to 5 scale (1 – strongly disagree; 2– disagree; 3 – undecided; 4 – agree; 5 – strongly agree)?

The work of the audio describer is prestigious

The work of the audio describer is well known by the general public

The work of the audio describer is well known by blind end-users

The work of the audio describer is stressful

The work of the audio describer is demanding

The work of the audio describer is well paid

The work of the audio describer is satisfying

The work of the audio describer is creative

The work of the audio describer is socially useful

In your opinion, which professional figure does a describer most closely resemble?

- ☐ Audiovisual translator
- ☐ Scriptwriter
- ☐ Author
- ☐ Artist
- ☐ Technician
- ☐ Actor
- ☐ Presenter - commentator
- ☐ Other, please specify:

Is there anything you would like to add? (Optional)

SECTION 4: EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND AND AD TRAINING

ONLY FOR AUDIO DESCRIBERS

This section includes 7 questions.

What is your educational background? (multiple answers possible)

- ☐ Language and linguistics
- ☐ Literature
- ☐ Translation
- ☐ Film and TV Studies
- ☐ Theatre studies
- ☐ Acting school
- ☐ Arts and/or museum studies
- ☐ Psychology
- ☐ Journalism or media studies
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Computer science and IT
- ☐ Other (specify)

Have you received specific AD training?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If so, in what form? (multiple answers possible)

- ☐ workshop
- ☐ vocational course
- ☐ university course
- ☐ internship
- ☐ in-house training (conducted at a company/institution, etc.)
- ☐ one-to-one instruction
- ☐ other, please specify:

Did you get a certificate after completing the training?

- ☐ Yes > [go to following question](#)
- ☐ No

If yes, have you ever been asked to show that certificate in order to get work?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

How do you continue to improve your skills and competences? (multiple answers possible)

- ☐ Experience in the field
- ☐ Participation in conferences, workshops, etc.
- ☐ Doing research (e.g. gathering information on product, discussion with film/theatre directors/producers or with museum staff and curators, etc.)
- ☐ In-house training (conducted at a company/institution, etc.)
- ☐ Analysis of existing ADs (focusing on the solutions adopted by colleagues)
- ☐ Study of existing material (guidelines, academic articles, books on AD, etc.)
- ☐ Not at the moment
- ☐ Other, please specify:

Have you ever taught AD yourself?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Is there anything you would like to add? (Optional)



SECTION 5: SKILLS AND COMPETENCES

ONLY FOR AUDIO DESCRIBERS

This is the last section of the questionnaire, and it includes 5 blocks. We are interested in your opinion and views on the type of skills, competences and activities you consider most appropriate and needed by professionals looking to work in this area. Please, rate the following items in terms of their significance, and tell us in the spaces provided about anything we missed.

1.

On a scale from 1 to 5 (1 – of no importance, 2 – of minor importance, 3 – neither important nor unimportant, 4 – important, 5 – extremely important), rate the following statements. **To deliver a good quality audio description, an audio describer should be able to ...** (Soft skills)

- ... solve problems
- ... have good communicative and interpersonal skills
- ... be assertive and fight for the quality of AD provision
- ... cope with time pressure
- ... organize work efficiently
- ... know when to call for expert help
- ... actively seek, evaluate, and if appropriate incorporate feedback
- ... work in a team with colleagues
- ... work in a team with blind patrons
- ... write quickly to a deadline
- ... improvise
-

2.

On a scale from 1 to 5 (1 – of no importance, 2 – of minor importance, 3 – neither important nor unimportant, 4 – important, 5 – extremely important), rate the following statements. **To deliver a good quality audio description, an audio describer should possess solid theoretical knowledge and understanding in the following areas:**

- Audiovisual texts and multimodality (depending on your area of expertise, this can include for instance theatre semiotics, film studies, arts and museum studies, etc.).
- Media accessibility (standards, legislation, guidelines, principles and applicable scenario's, technologies, etc.)
- AD history, status, and applicable scenarios (e.g. museum AD, film AD, AD for live events, etc.)
- AD principles, guidelines and standards
- Target group: types of visual impairment, end-user perception and cognitive processing, disabled needs
- Translation studies and audiovisual translation

- Language and linguistics (e.g. knowing the principles of text analysis, text cohesion and coherence; handling literary devices such as the use of similes, metaphors and figurative language; coping with different levels of formality in language; etc.)
- Scriptwriting
- World knowledge

3.

On a scale from 1 to 5 (1 – of no importance, 2 – of minor importance, 3 – neither important nor unimportant, 4 – important, 5 – extremely important), rate the following statements. **To deliver a good quality audio description, an audio describer should be able to possess solid technical knowledge and skills in the following areas:**

- AD script writing and textual editing
- Use of AD software
- Technology of AD provision
- AD voicing
- AD recording
- Mixing AD with original sound

4.

On a scale from 1 to 5 (1 – of no importance, 2 – of minor importance, 3 – neither important nor unimportant, 4 – important, 5 – extremely important), rate the following statements. **To deliver a good quality audio description, an audio describer should be able to (textual and linguistic skills):**

- ... express meaning succinctly
- ... select significant visual information
- ... use language that sparks the imagination
- ... compile an audio introduction
- ... provide the listener with a way of "seeing" what is described
- ... provide the listener with a way of "understanding" what is described
- ... possess an excellent command of mother tongue
- ... use non-ambiguous language
- ... use language that is suited to the product
- ... use language that is suited to the audience
-



5.

What are the most difficult aspects you find when you audio describe? Rate the following items on a scale from 1 to 5 (1 – extremely difficult, 2 – difficult, 3 – neither easy nor difficult, 4 – easy; 5 very easy)

- solving problems
- communicating and cooperating with others (peers and blind persons)
- being assertive and fighting for the quality of AD provision
- coping with time pressure
- organizing work efficiently
- knowing when to call for expert help
- actively seeking, evaluating, and if appropriate incorporating feedback
- working in a team with colleagues
- working in a team with blind patrons
- writing quickly to a deadline
- improvising (e.g. for live ADs)
- expressing meaning succinctly
- selecting significant visual information
- using language that sparks imagination
- choosing the most appropriate wording
- compiling an audio introduction
- providing the listener with a way of "seeing" what is described
- providing the listener with a way of "understanding" what is described
- possessing excellent command of mother tongue
- using non-ambiguous language
- using language that is suited to the product
- using language that is suited to the audience
- AD script writing and textual editing
- using AD software
- using technology of AD provision
- AD voicing
- AD recording
- mixing AD with original sound
-

Is there anything you would like to add? (Optional)

This was the last section of the questionnaire. Thank you very much for completing it and helping us with our research. Results and updates will be available on the project website www.adlabproject.eu/

SECTION 2: END-USER EXPERIENCE

FOR AD END-USERS ONLY

This section of the questionnaire is designed to gain knowledge on your frequency of use of 7 different types of audio description. For each type, you are given a choice of 5 possible answers. At the end of the questions you will find a text box where you can write your comments if your answer is not included on the list.

Question 1 of 7. When AD is available, how often do you use **film** audio description?

- ☐ very often
- ☐ often
- ☐ sometimes
- ☐ rarely
- ☐ never

Question 2 of 7. When AD is available, how often do you use **TV** audio description?

- ☐ very often
- ☐ often
- ☐ sometimes
- ☐ rarely
- ☐ never

Question 3 of 7. When AD is available, how often do you use **museum** audio description?

- ☐ very often
- ☐ often
- ☐ sometimes
- ☐ rarely
- ☐ never

Question 4 of 7. When AD is available, how often do you use **theatre** audio description?

- ☐ very often
- ☐ often
- ☐ sometimes
- ☐ rarely
- ☐ never

Question 5 of 7. When AD is available, how often do you use **opera** audio description?

- ☐ very often
- ☐ often
- ☐ sometimes
- ☐ rarely
- ☐ never

Question 6 of 7. When AD is available, how often do you use audio description for **other live events**?

- ☐ very often
- ☐ often
- ☐ sometimes
- ☐ rarely
- ☐ never

Question 7 of 7. When AD is available, how often do you use audio description of **teaching materials**?

- ☐ very often
- ☐ often
- ☐ sometimes
- ☐ rarely
- ☐ never

Is there anything you would like to add? (Optional)

SECTION 3: END-USER PERSPECTIVE ON THE WORK OF THE AUDIO DESCRIBER

FOR AD END-USERS ONLY

There now follow 3 more questions. The first gives you a choice of 8 possible answers, the second gives you a choice of 6 answers. In each case, please choose the answer that applies.

In your opinion, which professional figure does a describer most closely resemble?

- ☐ Audiovisual translator
- ☐ Scriptwriter
- ☐ Author
- ☐ Artist
- ☐ Technician
- ☐ Actor
- ☐ Presenter - commentator
- ☐ Other, please specify:

In your opinion, is the work of the audio describer an “art” (i.e., an innate talent that can be refined on the job) or a “craft” (i.e., an activity you learn, the result of specialized training)? This question gives you a choice of 6 answers.

- ☐ definitely an “art”
- ☐ more of an “art” than a “craft”
- ☐ it is a bit of both
- ☐ more of a “craft” than an “art”
- ☐ definitely a “craft”
- ☐ I don’t know

How would you rate the following 9 statements on the work of the audio describer on a 1 to 5 scale (where 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = undecided; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree)?

- The work of the audio describer is prestigious
- The work of the audio describer is well known by the general public
- The work of the audio describer is well known by blind end-users
- The work of the audio describer is stressful
- The work of the audio describer is demanding
- The work of the audio describer is well paid
- The work of the audio describer is satisfying
- The work of the audio describer is creative
- The work of the audio describer is socially useful

SECTION 4: END-USER SATISFACTION

FOR AD END-USERS ONLY

This is the last and the longest section of the questionnaire. It includes 8 questions, each with a choice of several possible answers. The section closes with a text box for your comments, if any.

This is question 1 of 8. Overall, are you satisfied with the provision (quantity) of ADs in your country? This question gives you a choice of 5 answers.

- ☐ very satisfied
- ☐ satisfied
- ☐ neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- ☐ dissatisfied
- ☐ Very dissatisfied

This is question 2 of 8. Overall, are you satisfied with the quality of ADs in your country? This question also gives you a choice of 5 answers.

- ☐ very satisfied
- ☐ satisfied
- ☐ neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- ☐ dissatisfied
- ☐ Very dissatisfied

Is there anything you would like to add? (Optional)

This is question 3 of 8. Overall, what are the things you appreciate most in an AD? This question gives you a choice of 10 answers. Multiple answers are possible.

- ☐ Selection and organization of the information
- ☐ Vocabulary of the audio description (vivid, imaginative, clear, adequate)
- ☐ Sentence structure of the audio description (clear and easy to follow)
- ☐ Grammatically correct language
- ☐ Language and style of the audio description that are suited to the audience and to the product (by product, we mean e.g. play, film, episode of a TV series or TV programme, work of art such as painting or artefact, etc.)
- ☐ Narrative of the audio description (the description helps you follow the story)
- ☐ Engaging audio description that gives the listener an emotional experience
- ☐ Audio description that really helps end-users to understand and enjoy the product

- ☐ Technical aspects of the audio description that the describer can control (e.g. AD timing, vocal skills)
- ☐ Technical aspects of the audio description that the describer cannot control (e.g. sound quality, mix of the AD with original sound)

This is question 4 of 8. Overall, what are the things you most dislike in an AD as far as the overall **quality of the information** is concerned? This question gives you a choice of 12 answers, and multiple answers are possible.

- ☐ The audio description is not coherent (i.e. does not makes comprehensible links between visual images, between images and sound and between images and dialogue)
- ☐ The audio description is not well synchronized with the dialogue and sound effects or with the images
- ☐ The audio description does not convey the world of the product (by product, we mean e.g. play, film, episode of a TV series or TV programme, work of art such as painting or artefact, etc.)
- ☐ The audio description does not make the product easy to follow
- ☐ The audio description includes too much information
- ☐ The audio description includes too little information
- ☐ The audio description does not make the product more enjoyable
- ☐ The audio description does not give you independence
- ☐ The audio description includes significant omissions (e.g. unexplained noises; unidentified characters)
- ☐ The audio describer gives their own opinion and prevents you from drawing your own conclusions
- ☐ The audio describer does not know what to say, how to say it, where to say it
- ☐ The audio describer talks over the dialogue or critical sound effects

This is question 5 of 8. Overall, what are the things you most dislike in an AD as far as **language and style** are concerned? This question gives you a choice of 10 answers, and multiple answers are possible.

- Lack of grammatically correct language
- Lack of comprehensible vocabulary
- Lack of comprehensible sentence structure
- Lack of evocative vocabulary
- Ambiguous language
- Language not suited to the product
- Language not suited to the audience
- Inaccurate use of words
- Too many repetitions
- The description is not engaging
- Lack of specialized language and terminology

This is question 6 of 8. Overall, what are the things you most dislike in an AD as far as the overall **technical aspects** are concerned? This question gives you a choice of 4 answers, and multiple answers are possible.

- ☐ AD timing
- ☐ Vocal skills of the describer (ability to deliver AD clearly and engagingly)
- ☐ The mix of the AD with original sound
- ☐ Technical sound editing (e.g. cutting out repeats so the recording flows smoothly)

This is question 7 of 8. Overall, what are the things you most dislike in an AD as far as the **textual aspects** are concerned? This question gives you a choice of 14 answers, and multiple answers are possible.

- ☐ General organization of the AD text
- ☐ Phraseology and wording
- ☐ Lack of details
- ☐ Excess of details
- ☐ Selection of visual information
- ☐ Inability to use imagery that appeals to senses other than vision (e.g. touch, taste, smell)
- ☐ Inability to use literary devices (e.g. simile or metaphor, etc.)
- ☐ Lack of audio introductions
- ☐ Lack of effective narrative (description fails to tell a story and engage the listener)
- ☐ Lack of background and contextual information
- ☐ Failure to provide an emotional experience
- ☐ Failure to engage you
- ☐ Failure to provide you with a way of "seeing" what is described
- ☐ Failure to provide you with a way of understanding what is described

This is question 8 of 8. What are your hopes regarding AD?

- ☐ More ADs will be offered in the future
- ☐ The overall textual and linguistic quality of AD will improve
- ☐ The overall technical quality of AD will improve
- ☐ Other, please specify:

Is there anything you would like to add? (Optional)

This was the last section of the questionnaire. Thank you very much for completing it and helping us with our research. Results and updates will be available on the project website www.adlabproject.eu/

SECTION 2 FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS

How long have you been working as a service provider (in any area of AD, e.g. film, TV, live events)?

- ☐ Less than one year
- ☐ 1-5 years
- ☐ 6-10 years
- ☐ 11-15 years
- ☐ 16-20 years
- ☐ over 20 years

What type of products do you offer most often as a service provider? (multiple answers possible)

- ☐ film
- ☐ TV
- ☐ museum
- ☐ theatre
- ☐ opera
- ☐ other live events
- ☐ AD of teaching materials
- ☐ other, please specify:

How much AD material have you provided over the years?

- ☐ Less than 50 hours
- ☐ 51-150 hours
- ☐ 151-300 hours
- ☐ Over 300 hours
- ☐ Other/comment:

Which of the following stages of the production process does your company have more experience with? (multiple answers possible)

- ☐ Writing and/or revising the AD script
- ☐ Translating AD scripts
- ☐ Using machine translation with post-editing
- ☐ Voicing the AD
- ☐ Assisting at recording the AD with voice talents
- ☐ Mixing the AD with the original soundtrack
- ☐ Quality control of the final product (e.g. checking the script or recording or both)
- ☐ Other, please specify:

In what language(s) do you provide audio descriptions?

[Drop-down menu](#)

Are you aware of the existence of audio description guidelines?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If so, what type of guidelines are they? (multiple answers possible)

- ☐ National guidelines
- ☐ In-house guidelines
- ☐ Guidelines from other countries
- ☐ Guidelines I created
- ☐ I don't know

In your opinion, is the work of the audio describer an “art” (an innate talent that can be refined on the job) or a “craft” (an activity you learn, the result of specialized training)?

- ☐ definitely an “art”
- ☐ more of an “art” than a “craft”
- ☐ it is a bit of both
- ☐ more of a “craft” than an “art”
- ☐ definitely a “craft”
- ☐ I don't know

How would you rate the following statements on a 1 to 5 scale (1 – strongly disagree; 2– disagree; 3 – undecided; 4 – agree; 5 – strongly agree)?

The work of the audio describer is prestigious

The work of the audio describer is well known by the general public

The work of the audio describer is well known by blind end-users

The work of the audio describer is stressful

The work of the audio describer is demanding

The work of the audio describer is well paid

The work of the audio describer is satisfying

The work of the audio describer is creative

The work of the audio describer is socially useful

In your opinion, which professional figure does a describer most closely resemble?

- ☐ Audiovisual translator
- ☐ Scriptwriter
- ☐ Author
- ☐ Artist
- ☐ Technician
- ☐ Actor
- ☐ Presenter - commentator
- ☐ Other, please specify:

Is there anything you would like to add? (Optional)

SECTION 3: SKILLS AND COMPETENCES

ONLY FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS

This is the last section of the questionnaire, and it includes 5 blocks. We are interested in your opinion and views on the type of skills, competences and activities you consider most appropriate and needed by professionals looking to work in this area. Please, rate the following items in terms of their significance, and tell us in the spaces provided about anything we missed.

1.

On a scale from 1 to 5 (1 – of no importance, 2 – of minor importance, 3 – neither important nor unimportant, 4 – important, 5 – extremely important), rate the following statements. **To deliver a good quality audio description, an audio describer should be able to ...** (Soft skills)

- ... solve problems
- ... have good communicative and interpersonal skills
- ... be assertive and fight for the quality of AD provision
- ... cope with time pressure
- ... organize work efficiently
- ... know when to call for expert help
- ... actively seek, evaluate, and if appropriate incorporate feedback
- ... work in a team with colleagues
- ... work in a team with blind patrons
- ... write quickly to a deadline
- ... improvise
-

2.

On a scale from 1 to 5 (1 – of no importance, 2 – of minor importance, 3 – neither important nor unimportant, 4 – important, 5 – extremely important), rate the following statements. **To deliver a good quality audio description, an audio describer should possess solid theoretical knowledge and understanding in the following areas:**

- Audiovisual texts and multimodality (depending on your area of expertise, this can include for instance theatre semiotics, film studies, arts and museum studies, etc.).
- Media accessibility (standards, legislation, guidelines, principles and applicable scenario's, technologies, etc.)
- AD history, status, and applicable scenarios (e.g. museum AD, film AD, AD for live events, etc.)
- AD principles, guidelines and standards
- Target group: types of visual impairment, end-user perception and cognitive processing, disabled needs
- Translation studies and audiovisual translation

- Language and linguistics (e.g. knowing the principles of text analysis, text cohesion and coherence; handling literary devices such as the use of similes, metaphors and figurative language; coping with different levels of formality in language; etc.)
- Scriptwriting
- World knowledge

3.

On a scale from 1 to 5 (1 – of no importance, 2 – of minor importance, 3 – neither important nor unimportant, 4 – important, 5 – extremely important), rate the following statements. **To deliver a good quality audio description, an audio describer should be able to possess solid technical knowledge and skills in the following areas:**

- AD script writing and textual editing
- Use of AD software
- Technology of AD provision
- AD voicing
- AD recording
- Mixing AD with original sound

4.

On a scale from 1 to 5 (1 – of no importance, 2 – of minor importance, 3 – neither important nor unimportant, 4 – important, 5 – extremely important), rate the following statements. **To deliver a good quality audio description, an audio describer should be able to (textual and linguistic skills):**

- ... express meaning succinctly
- ... select significant visual information
- ... use language that sparks the imagination
- ... compile an audio introduction
- ... provide the listener with a way of "seeing" what is described
- ... provide the listener with a way of "understanding" what is described
- ... possess an excellent command of mother tongue
- ... use non-ambiguous language
- ... use language that is suited to the product
- ... use language that is suited to the audience

5.

In your opinion, what are the most difficult aspects of the work of the audio describer? Rate the following items on a scale from 1 to 5 (1 – extremely difficult, 2 – difficult, 3 – neither easy nor difficult, 4 – easy; 5 very easy)

- solving problems
- communicating and cooperating with others (peers and blind persons)
- being assertive and fighting for the quality of AD provision
- coping with time pressure
- organizing work efficiently
- knowing when to call for expert help
- actively seeking, evaluating, and if appropriate incorporating feedback
- working in a team with colleagues
- working in a team with blind patrons
- writing quickly to a deadline
- improvising (e.g. for live ADs)
- expressing meaning succinctly
- selecting significant visual information
- using language that sparks imagination
- choosing the most appropriate wording
- compiling an audio introduction
- providing the listener with a way of "seeing" what is described
- providing the listener with a way of "understanding" what is described
- possessing excellent command of mother tongue
- using non-ambiguous language
- using language that is suited to the product
- using language that is suited to the audience
- AD script writing and textual editing
- using AD software
- using technology of AD provision
- AD voicing
- AD recording
- mixing AD with original sound
- other, please specify:

Is there anything you would like to add? (Optional)

This was the last section of the questionnaire. Thank you very much for completing it and helping us with our research. Results and updates will be available on the project website www.adlabproject.eu/