

Consolidated Piloting & Validation Report

Quality Assurance in non-formal Adult Learning and Education

Consolidated Piloting & Validation Report

Prepared for the Final Report — July 2026

This report brings together all piloting and validation activities carried out to date on the Q-ALE model and self-assessment tool: national focus groups in Poland, Croatia and Finland; an EU-wide online validation questionnaire; the structured piloting log of the interactive self-assessment tool; and feedback from the EAEA online dissemination workshops. The purpose of this report is to provide the National Agency with a comprehensive overview of all piloting activities carried out throughout the project, presenting the outcomes and conclusions of each individual activity in a clear and structured way.

Q-ALE – Quality assurance in non-formal Adult Learning and Education – is an Erasmus+ initiative developed by sTOP (Poland), together with EAEA (Belgium), POU Varaždin (Croatia) and the Association of Finnish Study Centres (Finland). It is co-funded by the European Union; the views expressed in the underlying pilot materials are those of the participants and partners and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or EAEA.

1. Summary

Across every strand of feedback — focus groups, the online questionnaire, the tool's usage log and workshop evaluations — the same picture emerges: Q-ALE has landed well. Participants across all three pilot countries and the EU-wide questionnaire responded with genuine enthusiasm, and the results below give the partnership a strong, evidence-backed foundation to build on for the next piloting round.

- Reception is strongly positive. Respondents across all three pilot countries described the model as “inspirational”, “inviting” and comprehensive; 10 of 11 online-questionnaire respondents rated the Code of Conduct “useful” or better, 11 of 12 said they would recommend it to others, and the EAEA dissemination workshop scored 4.5/5 for usefulness.
- The core model resonates. No focus group or respondent, in any country, questioned the value or relevance of the Code of Conduct itself — the feedback below is entirely about refining how it's introduced and navigated, not about the substance.
- The same handful of practical suggestions came up independently in Poland, Finland and the questionnaire: make the tool's sequence more visible, tighten role definitions, and add a plain-language legend for the rating scale. Because these points converge so consistently, the partnership can act on them with confidence.
- Tone is working for most users, and the data shows where to fine-tune it. Playful elements (e.g. the “Jedi Master” badge) were genuinely enjoyed by many respondents; a smaller group — mainly older or less digitally-familiar participants — would prefer a more neutral option, which points to an easy segmentation fix rather than a redesign.
- The piloting log confirms the tool is being actively used and iterated on ahead of full roll-out (see Section 5), and the consortium has a baseline of real profiles to track from here.

Section 8 sets out concrete, low-effort recommendations to carry this momentum into the next piloting round.

2. Overview of Piloting & Validation Activities

Five parallel strands of evidence feed into this report:

Activity	Countries / scope	Period	Respondents / entries
National focus groups (sTOP)	Poland	18 Mar 2026	Focus group notes
National focus group	Finland (Assoc. of Finnish Study Centres)	6 Feb 2026	Focus group notes
Online validation questionnaire	Finland, Croatia, other EU (open form)	Feb – Apr 2026	12 responses
Self-assessment tool piloting log	Croatia (POU Varaždin)	Feb – Mar 2026	61 logged submissions / 14 unique profiles
EAEA online workshop – “Who is afraid of quality assurance?”	EU-wide, online	24 Mar 2026	Open registration + panel
Dissemination workshop evaluation	EU-wide, online	10 Jun 2026	8 responses

The online validation process ran from 10 March to 12 June 2026 and remains open for further review; the figures in this report reflect submissions received to date.

3. National Focus Group Findings

Structured, in-depth focus groups were held in partner organizations NGO Trainers’ Association (sTOP) and Association of Finnish Study Centres (FSC) since they have a large pool of experts and established networks of relevant stakeholders. The aim of the focus groups was preliminary testing of the model within the partnership and identifying weak points that could affect clarity or relevance of the model. Based on the received feedback certain adjustments to the model were made before launching the final version. The following findings represent the key points identified during the focus groups:

3.1 Poland (sTOP, 18 March 2026)

Participants were positive about the topic and the structure of the model, describing it as comprehensive and well signposted. Three concrete issues were raised for revision:

- Inconsistent numbers: the model refers to 6 values in one place and 7 in another, which reads as an error rather than a deliberate distinction.
- Role tagging is too broad: almost every checklist item is currently marked as relevant to almost every role. Participants suggested either bolding the primary role for each item or producing three separate assessment forms (manager / course designer / educator).
- Peer learning and “Staff” are ambiguous: it wasn't clear how peer learning applies to managers, participants assumed (incorrectly) the tool was only for educators, and there is no guidance on whether contractors or occasional collaborators should count toward organisational “Staff” size.

“Reduce the number of ticks to fewer roles, or use bold to show who it mainly applies to – at the moment everything applies to almost everyone.” — sTOP piloting meeting, 18 March 2026

“An explanation is needed – we assumed this was only for educators.” — sTOP piloting meeting, 18 March 2026

3.2 Finland (Association of Finnish Study Centres, 6 February 2026)

The Finnish discussion raised the same structural concerns independently, plus additional points on target groups and usability of the online tool:

- Process confusion: no single place explains how the Code of Conduct, the questionnaire and the workbook relate to one another, or in what order to use them.
- Role mismatch between tools: role names/definitions differ between the Code of Conduct and the questionnaire (e.g. “course organiser” is not clearly defined against “course designer” or “manager”).
- Fit for smaller organisations: the tools work well for study centres and larger organisations, but local/volunteer-run associations found the material too extensive; participants suggested a lighter entry point for this group.
- Tone: the playful framing (including role badges such as “Jedi Master”) works for some audiences but not for all age groups and backgrounds.
- Discoverability: the workbook was not immediately noticed alongside the other materials, and once found, its questions felt heavy coming straight after the survey; one participant also didn't realise their results could be exported and revisited later, suggesting this existing feature could be surfaced more clearly.

“You shouldn't be left alone with the results – for example, someone at the district level could join the local association to think about the results together at a development day. It creates dialogue.” — Finland piloting notes, 6 February 2026

The Code of Conduct itself was described as impactful, linguistically clear and well-justified, and participants agreed the tool works both as preparation before, and reflection after, training — a strong endorsement of the core content from an experienced adult-education network.

4. EU-Wide Online Validation Questionnaire

The open online questionnaire collected 12 responses between 6 February and 14 April 2026, from Finland (study centres, Helsinki area) and Croatia (Varaždin), among others. It asked users to rate the Code of Conduct and self-assessment tool and to describe their experience in their own words.

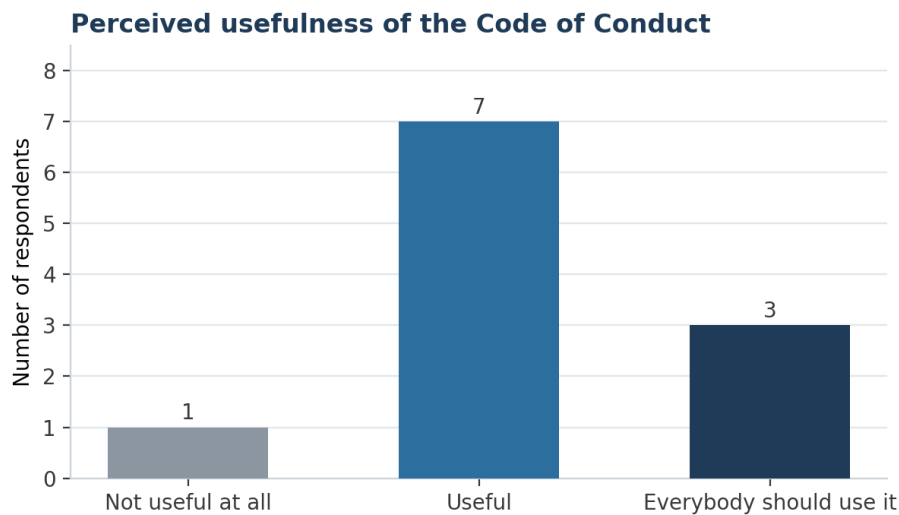


Figure 1. Perceived usefulness of the Code of Conduct (n=11 rated responses).

Ten of eleven respondents who answered this question rated the Code of Conduct “Useful” or “Everybody should use it”; only one respondent — from an organisation outside the adult-education sector — found it “not useful at all”, while still noting the guidance was transferable to other professional settings.

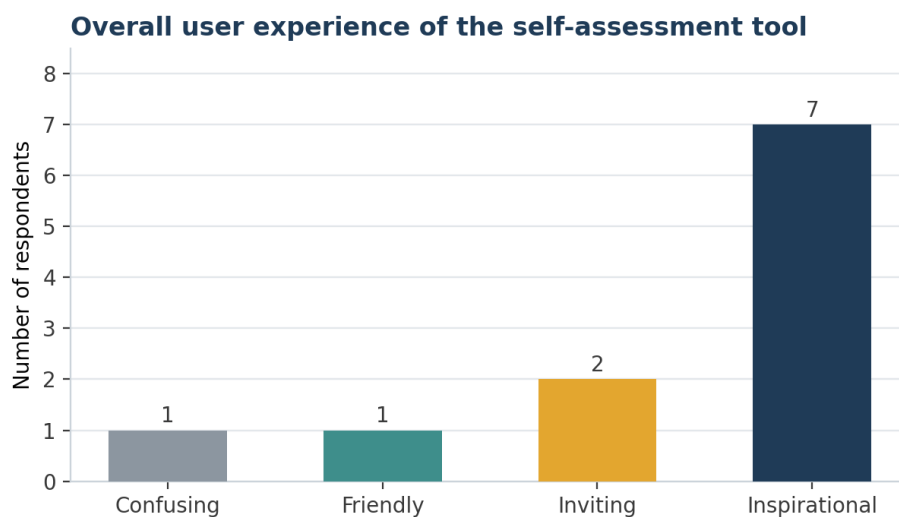


Figure 2. Overall user experience of the self-assessment tool (n=11).

The dominant descriptor was “inspirational” (7 of 11), followed by “inviting”. The single “confusing” rating came with a specific, actionable complaint: the response scale is not explained in words.

“There should be a description of the scale – for example, what does the number 1 (“ghost town”) mean in words.” — Online validation questionnaire, 6 Feb 2026

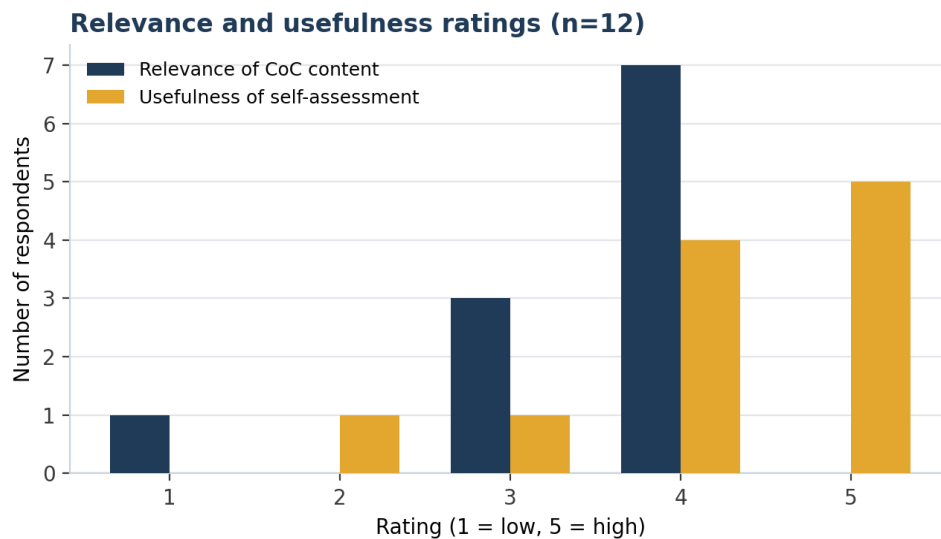


Figure 3. Relevance of Code of Conduct content and usefulness of the self-assessment, rated 1–5.

Both ratings cluster at the top of the scale (mode = 4), confirming that where users engage with the content, they find it relevant and useful. Open comments converged on the same practical asks raised in the focus groups: clearer instructions, a visible link between the Code of Conduct and the self-assessment/workbook, and worked examples.

“The workbook should be connected to the Code of Conduct.” — Online validation questionnaire, 6 Feb 2026

“I don’t know what the mini-plan is.” — Online validation questionnaire, 6 Feb 2026

11 of 12 respondents said they would recommend the tool to others (managers, colleagues, member organisations, “anyone involved in adult education”), and 10 of 11 said the Fix-It / mini-plan mitigation approach feels doable in real life — a strong signal that, once the navigation issues above are resolved, the model is close to ready for wider roll-out.

5. Self-Assessment Tool Piloting Log (Croatia)

The interactive self-assessment tool logs every submission automatically. The log analysed here covers 61 entries, all from Croatia (POU Varaždin), between 6 February and 5 March 2026.

5.1 Data quality note

Before drawing conclusions, it's worth flagging that this log is not yet a clean end-user dataset.

Duplication: the 61 logged entries reduce to 14 distinct profiles once exact repeat submissions (consistent with testers submitting the form more than once, rather than 61 separate individuals completing it).

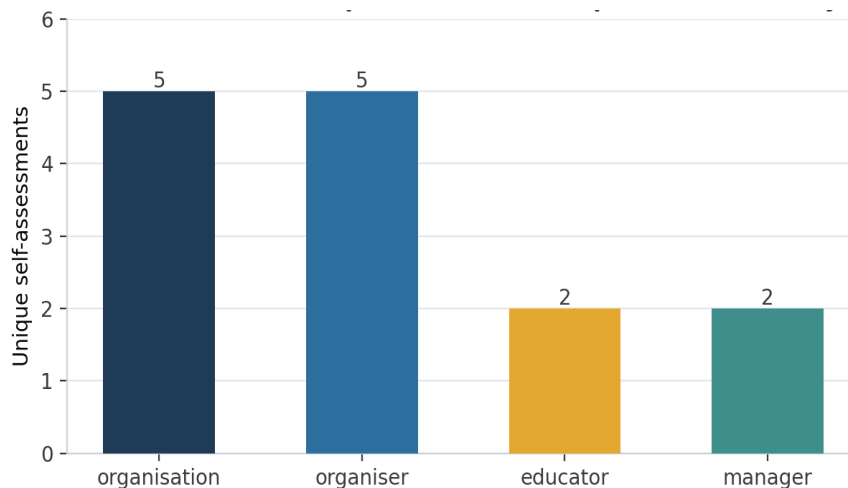


Figure 4. Unique self-assessment submissions by role (n=14, Croatia pilot).

Within this small, cleaned set, “organiser” and “organisation” level submissions dominate; only two educator and two manager profiles are represented. Scores cluster around 3.6–5.0 out of 5, with the lowest average (3.7) for an educator profile flagging gaps in fair/transparent assessment methods and protection of intellectual property, and the highest (5.0) for a private-sector organisation profile with strong monitoring and self-evaluation practices already in place. This mirrors the focus-group finding that role coverage in the current tool is uneven and would benefit from more structured, role-specific prompts.

6. EAEA Dissemination Workshops

6.1 “Who is afraid of quality assurance?” (24 March 2026)

EAEA hosted an online workshop with Q-ALE partners and external experts (Tanja Možina, Slovenian Institute for Adult Education; Chiara Marchetta, FORMA.Azione) to present the first version of the model and discuss quality assurance approaches more broadly, including self-assessment and the European Peer Review methodology. National experts from Poland, Croatia and Finland presented the preliminary piloting results summarised in Sections 3–5. Cross-country, the panel agreed on five shared structural challenges for QA in non-formal ALE:

- Limited system-level support for QA in non-formal ALE
- Time constraints that make it difficult to integrate QA into daily work
- Sustainability of QA practice beyond project funding
- Recognition of learning outcomes in non-formal settings
- Administrative burden, with a clear need to simplify processes

6.2 Follow-up workshop evaluation (10 June 2026)

A subsequent online session on organisational sustainability and resilience — which also referenced the Q-ALE model directly — was evaluated by 8 participants.

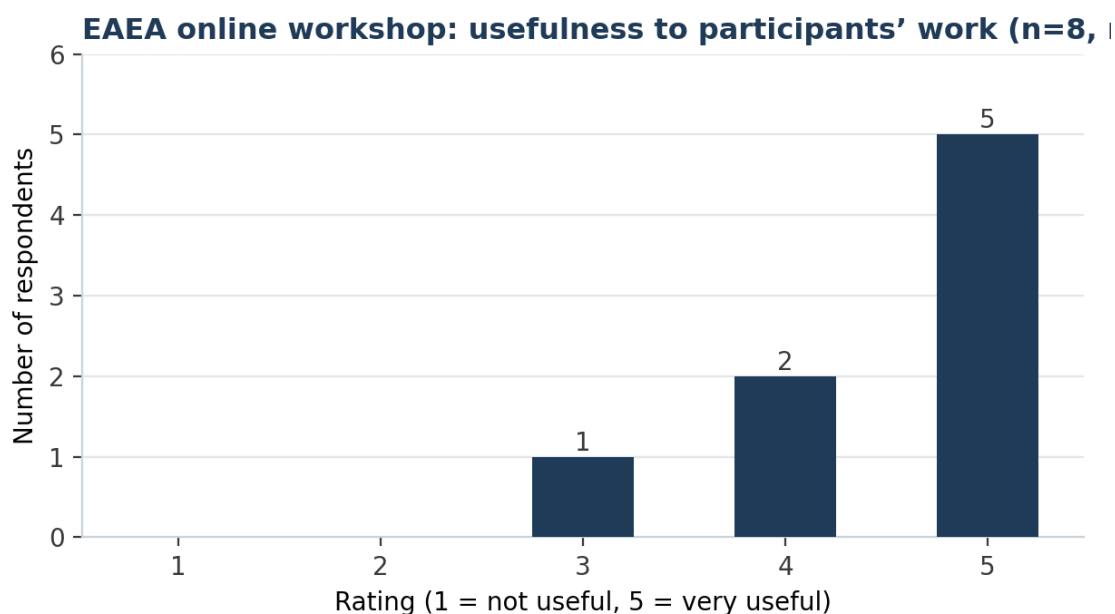


Figure 5. Workshop usefulness rating (n=8, mean 4.5/5).

Feedback was uniformly positive (all ratings 3–5, five respondents giving the top score) and requests for change were minor: more discussion time, and a wish among some participants to get to know the Q-ALE model itself in more depth before or during the session, echoing the “we need more explanation” theme from the Polish and Finnish focus groups.

“It was interesting to explore different aspects of organisational sustainability and their contribution to resilience.” — Workshop evaluation, 10 June 2026

7. Cross-Cutting Themes

Reading the five strands of evidence together, four themes recur regardless of country, format or audience:

7.1 The content is right; the packaging isn't finished

No pilot group or respondent questioned the value or relevance of quality assurance as a topic, or the substance of the Code of Conduct. Every point of friction is about presentation, sequencing and onboarding — not the underlying model.

7.2 Roles need a single, consistent definition

Poland, Finland and the questionnaire independently raised the same issue: role names and role-to-question mapping differ between the Code of Conduct, the questionnaire and the workbook, and most items are currently tagged as relevant to almost every role.

7.3 Users need to see “where am I in the process”

Confusion about the order of tools (Code of Conduct → self-assessment → workbook → results/badge), missing scale explanations, and one participant not realising results could be exported and revisited are all

instances of the same underlying gap: there is no visible map of the user journey — an easy, low-cost fix once flagged.

7.4 Tone must flex for a broad, cross-generational audience

Playful elements (badges, informal language) were explicitly praised by some respondents and explicitly flagged as alienating by others, particularly for older users or those less familiar with pop-culture references. This is a segmentation question, not a reason to remove playfulness altogether.