

Monitor report 1

GOLD project

Programme: Lifelong Learning Programme Leonardo
Action: Leonardo da Vinci Transfer of innovation
Project title: Goldilocks-based learning Overcomes Learning Disabilities (GOLD)

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Introduction

In this first monitor report of the GOLD project the state of art is described for each of the six work packages as being described in the consensus document. GOLD is a project financed by the Leonardo Life Long Learning program. The goal of the project is to test the method 'SlimStampen' on effectiveness on the population students with disabilities in three different countries. Chapter one describes the context of the project and gives a short explanation on SlimStampen. Chapter two contains a short description of the working method of the author to obtain all relevant information for monitoring all actions in the GOLD project.

In chapters three to five the process and outcomes of work packages 1, 2, 3 and 6 are described including the state of art on the related deliverables. These deliverables are marked with 'D' and the number corresponding with the list in the consensus document (the consensus document is D1, this monitor report is D17).

Work packages 4 and 5 are not included in this report, since these two work packages are relevant in the second half of 2013. This monitor report will conclude with chapter six in which the steps for the next half a year of the project are mentioned.

1 GOLD project and Slim Stampen

In project GOLD the project partners want to test if students with special educational needs (e.g. learning disabilities like autism or acquired brain injury) can benefit from an individual tailor-made learning method called 'SlimStampen'. The three test locations are ReaCollege Groningen in The Netherlands, Orchardville Society in Ireland and CRPG in Portugal. The University of Groningen (RUG) is project partner too and supports these three partners in the testing. RUG is the owner of SlimStampen. ReaCollege (location Nijmegen) in The Netherlands is project coordinator and toetsen meten & weten, also in The Netherlands is external evaluator (subcontractor).

SlimStampen is a method that is used as a tool to help students to learn facts, words, topography, etc. It is based on scientific models and formulas that take into account the individual knowledge the student already obtained and the way each individual remembers facts. This makes studying more efficient, more effective and more encouraging. The method is already scientifically tested in mainstream education with good results: 1) higher grades, 2) more efficient/faster learning because it supports students on an individual basis, 3) much more motivated students because it supports students on their individual level: Not too easy and not too difficult and with tangible results.

The highest aim of project GOLD is to come to an evidence based tool that helps students with special educational needs to learn more efficient and to remember more. At the end of the project we will have the following results:

- Materials of one curriculum for each partner are placed in the SlimStampen application
- Three groups of students have worked with SlimStampen
- Dissemination of the results of the test in writing and in a conference about the effectiveness of SlimStampen on this population students

Apart from measuring the learning gains by a final test, the learner's motivation to learn is assessed too by administering a questionnaires and/ or by an interview with the learners.

The project consortium consists of four partners. Three of them are specialized in educating people with (learning) disabilities, with the aim to get a job on the open labour market and/or participating (more) independent in society; inclusion. These partners are the test locations mentioned earlier in this chapter in The Netherlands, Ireland and Portugal. The fourth partner is the University of Groningen. The University developed and tested SlimStampen, which became an evidence-based tool.

SlimStampen will be tested in three sites throughout Europe. The test group will consist of people with special educational needs that could profit from this new way to process learning topics. When they finish the program, students will get an officially recognized certificate. At every test location the participants have a different type of disability. So in this project for these three types of populations SlimStampen will be tested.

The project plan, deliverables and time schedule are to be found in the consensus document. This document gives more information on the project, on the different work packages and activities planned. See also chapter 1 as the consensus document is a deliverable in work package one.

2 Monitoring the project

In order to keep track of all actions in the project and to monitor both the process and contents in the relevant work packages, the external evaluator (author of this report) kept in contact with all project partners at a regular basis.

The following actions have taken place and provided all needed information and the input for this first monitor report:

- Attending the kick off meeting in November 2012
- Meetings with the project coordinator, face to face
- Frequent email contact with the project coordinator
- Email consultations with all four project partners
- Studying minutes of the project meetings of November 2012 and February 2013
- Summarizing test conditions and outlines and formulating remaining questions
- Telephone conversations with the project partners

All information was put into a working document, a table that is clustered by the work packages. This document has been and will be updated monthly by the external evaluator and the version of 21st of June 2013 is the basis for this monitor report.

3 WP 1 Management and coordination consortium

The first work package is about the project management and coordination (REACollege Nijmegen) and all tasks that come with this. WP 1 will run throughout the whole project. Deliverables that have to be finished between the start of the project and June 2013 are:

- Consensus document (D1)
- Project website in English and partly in Portuguese (D13)

The consensus document was discussed and agreed upon in the first project meeting at the very start of the project in November 2012. The final version was sent to all project partners in

December 2012 by the project coordinator. This document, as all other project documents and forms (deliverables), are to be found at (the secured part of) the project website. They are not included in this report to prevent this report from becoming too thick.

The document defines roles, way of working, objectives, tasks and activities for each partner and for the project as a whole. The aim is to achieve a smooth running project, which will lead to the predicted results for students with disabilities in each country, for all partners of the project and for all interested providers of vocational education/rehabilitation in Europe.

The project coordinator made sure there is a project website available. There has been a delay of a few months for the final version to be published since the responsible technician of ReaCollege Nijmegen had urgent matters to consider first. The English website is a deliverable of the project. The translation in Portuguese was an extra to meet the needs of the Portuguese partner. They could start the translation after the English version was (quite) ready.

The project website informs others about the project and should be used as a tool to share important information between the project partners too. The project website was first made in a test version and made available to the project partners in February 2013 in English. Partners had the chance to comment on the contents and made translations into Portuguese. In the beginning of June 2013 the website has been put online and is available to everyone. The main information on the project is available in Portuguese too. Project partners can log in on a secured part of the website where they exchange important project documents. The website is to be found at: <http://www.gold-leonardo.eu>.

Apart from the deliverables in this work package the project coordinator is responsible for running the project in time, making sure that all project partners fulfill their role the best way possible and taking care of the finances and other practical issues in the project. He prepares international meetings, together with the hosting country/ project partner and is chair of these meetings. Making notes and informing all partners on necessary details is included.

4 WP 2 Outlines and test conditions and WP 3 Input curricula into SlimStampen

In work package 2 the outlines and test conditions for each test site are defined. WP 2 runs until March 2013. WP 3 ends at the beginning of August 2013 and concerns the translation of the curricula to be tested into the database and website of the program SlimStampen.

There is an overlap with WP 3 because these two work packages, 2 and 3, both are the preparation for the test phase in WP 4. Activities in both work packages have been performed simultaneously. Therefore these two work packages are described in this one chapter.

Since all three test locations decided to start the first tests with SlimStampen in June 2013 already (instead of August conform the project plan), WP 2 and WP 3 are finished at the beginning of June 2013. Considering the time schedule of the project this means that WP 2 has been prolonged from March till June and WP 3 has been shortened from August to June 2013.

Deliverables WP 2:

- Translation of SlimStampen documents in English and Portuguese (D2)
- Presentation of the SlimStampen concept (D3)

- Presentation how to teach people with learning disabilities (D4)
- Description of the outlines and conditions of the tests (D5)

Deliverables WP 3:

- Translation of curricula of three test locations in SlimStampen system and website (D6)
- Database ready for the curricula in SlimStampen application (D7)

The draft leaflet on SlimStampen in English was made in December 2012. The leaflet was finalized and made available through the project website in May 2013 also for external visitors of the website (see also chapter 5 Dissemination). Portugal is translating the leaflet in June 2013 into Portuguese. There is no Dutch version of the leaflet since there is no need for translation.

CRPG in Portugal translated the needed information on testing with SlimStampen in May 2013. This concerns the general part of the project website. CRPG decided not to translate documents for internal use since there is no budget for this.

As far as the SlimStampen program is concerned, Portugal entered minor problems with the translation in Portuguese, but in the end all questions and answer pairs were inserted in Portuguese. The translation into English (as SlimStampen is a program in Dutch) was without problems.

The University of Groningen has presented the SlimStampen concept in detail during the kick-off meeting in November 2012 using PowerPoint. The first ideas on testing SlimStampen were discussed for each test location. The University of Groningen was and is always available for further questions and guides the other project partners in preparing for the tests.

In order to get a clear view on the specifics on how to teach people with different kinds of learning disabilities, the project coordinator made a form: 'how to teach people with learning disabilities'. Project partners were thus asked to share information on the kind of learning problems of their specific population students and how to meet the needs of the students in the best way possible. The partners shared this information during the project meetings in their presentations related to testing SlimStampen. The form wasn't really used except as a reminder to pay attention to this topic. This was enough for the purpose of this project.

The University of Groningen has made five forms for the three test locations in order to collect the needed information on participants in the tests, size of the test groups, items to be tested and specifics on the test situations. All these aspects together make the test outlines and conditions.

The five forms concern:

- guideline study/ test
- informed consent form
- participant form
- session form
- study form

In April and May 2013 the specifics of these outlines and conditions were worked out in cooperation with the University of Groningen. All three test locations have a unique situation as the courses/ curricula they are testing are different from each other, but also the specifics of the participants are distinct, varying from acquired brain injury to learning disabilities and autism spectrum disorders. The external evaluator has given advice on a few aspects of the test conditions to the three test locations, which they themselves discussed with the University of Groningen. The external evaluator has been in contact with the university too on some of the details such as whether or not to organize more than one test session for a partner/ test location if possible and to

let participants both use SlimStampen and Flashcard. Flashcard is a computer program too, but not anticipating on an individual learning curve and is used as comparison to SlimStampen.

To fine tune the last details on the test conditions, the university of Groningen has been in contact, through face to face meetings and several Skype meetings, with all three test locations before the first tests were about to run.

Summary of the test outlines and conditions for each of the test locations:

1. ReaCollege Groningen The Netherlands

Thirty-two participants will join the test of SlimStampen. They are divided in three different classes. Two classes (both in location Groningen) work with SlimStampen, the other group with Flashcard (location Leeuwarden). Participants use the program in the lessons during an ICT course. Test session 1 took place in June. The three mentioned groups worked three times (three takes) for about 15 minutes with SlimStampen or Flashcard on the same 20 items. These 20 items appeared in each take at random at the screen for participants to answer). After summer holiday more tests will follow. In total ReaCollege has about 200 items inserted into the program, so 10 clusters of 20 items ready to be used for testing SlimStampen. Multiple choice items are added too (but not yet tested in the first session of 3 takes). So it is possible to take other sets of 20 questions for further testing. The plan is that ReaCollege is going to do multiple test sessions, with every participant (at least) one time using Flashcard and (at least) one time SlimStampen. The participants don't know whether they are working with SlimStampen or Flashcard. At the end of each course the participants make a test like they would normally do. This is a multiple choice test. Since the final test is already multiple choice, ReaCollege thinks using multiple choice items in SlimStampen would not be the best solution. At ReaCollege the participants are adults with autism spectrum disorders or another psychiatric disability.

2. Orchardville Society Ireland

In Ireland there are 40 participants for the testing of SlimStampen. These participants attend the 4 weeks course 'British Red Cross Aid'. Twenty people will be using SlimStampen, the other 20 will be using Flashcard. There will be four test sessions, one in June, August, September and October. In each of these four tests account for 10 participants (5 using SlimStampen and 5 using Flashcard). Each of these groups of 10 will be as homogenize as possible considering the intellectual abilities of the people. Participants of Orchardville Society have learning disabilities. Participants will work on 40 multiple choice questions during the course using SlimStampen or Flashcard. The participants don't know whether they are working with SlimStampen or Flashcard. At the end of the course there is a paper test like always.

3. CRPG Portugal

In Portugal two courses will be used for testing SlimStampen: 1) computers and 2) legislation. For the course computers 20 participants are selected for joining the test session, 10 in the first group (5 using SlimStampen and 5 Flashcard) and another 10 participants in the second group (also 5 and 5 using SS/FC). For legislation there are 23 participants. In the first group there are 10 students (5 SS and 5 FC) and in the second group there are 13 participants (6 using SS and 7 FC). There will be four test sessions, two for each course. The first two will be in June and the others will be in July and October. Participants of CRPG mostly suffer from acquired brain damage. For the computer 40 questions are used in SlimStampen/ Flashcard and for legislation 56 questions. At the end of the course the participants make a test like they would have to make in normal circumstances too.

From December 2012 until March 2013 the three test locations have been working on the curricula they would like to use in the test phase and have been in close contact with the University of Groningen to make choices on the curricula. The question-answer pairs have to meet certain

criteria to be fit for SlimStampen. During the meeting in Portugal at the end of February 2013 final choices were made on the curricula and the first specifics on the test settings for the three test locations were discussed. The insertion of the questions and answers into the program of SlimStampen, into the database, started in that time too.

One of the requests from some project partners was to be able to use multiple choice items in SlimStampen. Before this project multiple choice was not a possibility in SlimStampen, so this system had to be built by the University of Groningen. It was much more challenging than expected. The multiple choice system has been tested by providing it to about 300 students of the University, to help them learn biopsychology. No problems surfaced. Then a pilot study was run with about 140 students in secondary education (vwo/havo) in The Netherlands to test whether multiple choice works as well as open questions. The preliminary results on this pilot are that open questions are better, but multiple choice still provides good learning gains. Now it will be tested in this GOLD project as well.

In June 2013 for all three test locations the databases in SlimStampen were ready to start the testing (test phase, WP 4). Due to some technical problems with the server that provides for SlimStampen the first tests actually started in the last week of June and not sooner as was planned.

Motivation

One of the project goals is to measure the participants' motivation for using SlimStampen. This will be done by a short questionnaire, which might be combined with an interview afterwards the course if that is normal procedure at the end of a course. The University of Groningen prepared 5 questions to measure motivation. The external evaluator gave input on this and provided relevant information on how to measure motivation. If test locations already use some kind of form for evaluation, the motivation questions can be easily added. The project partners were asked to comment on the five questions for measuring motivation. All are asked to use these at the end of each test session.

5 WP 6 Dissemination

Work package 6 is aimed at informing relevant stakeholders about the GOLD project and the results. Informing about the results is too soon yet since the test phase is upcoming. All partners have a role in this work package.

Dissemination thus plays an important role in the second part of the project, after the results are to be presented. In the first half of the project the focus is on a good preparation on the test phase in order create the optimum test conditions. Therefore in this phase of the project there is not much to tell about the dissemination actions yet. In the next monitor report there will be more information on the dissemination.

Deliverables up until June 2013:

- Leaflet/ paper brochure on the project (D12)

The draft leaflet on SlimStampen in English was made in December 2012. The leaflet was finalized and made available through the project website in May 2013 also for external visitors of the website. Portugal is translating the leaflet in June 2013. There is no Dutch version of the leaflet since there is no need for translation.

In order to plan local dissemination actions, the project coordinator and external evaluator made a form 'Local dissemination plan'. The partners received it at in January 2013 and should fill out this plan before August 2013. One of the partners already filled it out in February 2013. This partner used this for collecting participants for the testing too.

Dissemination GOLD project

The following dissemination activities have taken place so far concerning the GOLD project:

Presentations

The project partners have informed stakeholders through face to face meetings, presentations (for example for about 30 minutes) and lectures. Stakeholders for example are: colleagues (for example teachers/trainers and psychologists), schools who deliver participants for the courses through teachers, school principles and students, funders and referral agents who deliver participants and people with disabilities and their parents/ care takers. As the lectures are concerned, the GOLD project has been mentioned and discussed explicitly during lectures on memory and learning for university students (University of Groningen). The class is about 300 second year students of psychology, whom about 70% are interested in studying clinical populations. A colleague professor at the University of Groningen has used the SlimStampen/GOLD based slides too in his presentations on teaching methodology to future high school teachers (about 60 students). The slides contain a link to the website.

Announcement

Two project partners, CRPG in Portugal and the developer of SlimStampen of the University of Groningen, have made an announcement about the GOLD project and their participation in it at their own website. Please see:

<http://www.cprg.pt/estudosProjectos/Projectos/Paginas/GOLD.aspx> and <http://www.van-rijn.org>.

Publication

The University of Groningen has written an article 'Smarter learning with SlimStampen' about the project GOLD in February 2013 (D16). This article have been published on the project website and it has been distributed to all teachers and parents involved. It's to be downloaded at:

http://www.gold-leonardo.eu/assets/docs_public/Smarter-learning-with-SlimStampen.docx.

Dissemination SlimStampen

The following dissemination activities have taken place concerning SlimStampen itself, being a tool that has already been proven to be effective in regular (secondary) education:

Suppliers of educational material

The developer/researcher of SlimStampen (University of Groningen) is in negotiation with a large Dutch publisher of schoolbooks and school materials (Noordhoff) to get permission to use the publishers material with SlimStampen. Also he is in discussion with an online provider of math tools to incorporate SlimStampen in their system (Rekenweb.nl). If that would work out, he will be able to make SlimStampen available to about 800.000 school children in the Netherlands, with new projects in Germany and England coming up.

Interviews

The developer/ researcher of SlimStampen (University of Groningen) has been interviewed about SlimStampen for the magazine Prima Onderwijs. This is a magazine that is distributed to all Dutch schools. The article on the interview was published in this magazine in May 2013. Also, he has been

interviewed about SlimStampen for the Dutch national radio. In this interview the general principles of SlimStampen were explained.

In the above mentioned dissemination activities concerning SlimStampen, the GOLD project was mentioned too as an example of the breadth of this system, and that it can be used in many different populations, and in populations that have a lot of individual variation.

Since GOLD doesn't have any outcomes yet, at this point it is difficult to present GOLD as a topic on its own. More dissemination actions will take place when the first results and observations of the tests are available. Please also see chapter 6.

6 What's next

During the next months, from July 2013 until January 2014 the test phase of project GOLD is executed. This is work package 4. At all three test locations the SlimStampen method is tested in several sessions on effectiveness (learning gains) and motivation of the participants. As can be read in this monitor report, the project partners aim to end the test sessions in October 2013. The reason for this is to be able to present the first results of the testing during the next project meeting in Ireland at the end of November 2013.

During and after the test phase using the SlimStampen system will be evaluated by the partners in cooperation with the University of Groningen. If needed, adjustments will be made in the way SlimStampen is implemented in the curricula of the partners. This is work package 5. WP 5 has to be finished in March 2014.

As dissemination activities are concerned, these will be ongoing. Dissemination will be a bigger part of the project during this phase of the project. Publications will be written about the results of the testing, there will be presentations, and also all partners will organize national events and an international event in the last few months of the project.

The project will close in April 2014. The next monitor report will appear in January 2014.