

## ACTrain

*Accessible web-based and interactive video-supported skills transfer*

## Progress Report Public Part

### *Project information*

Project acronym: ACTrain

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### **Executive Summary**

Targeted audiences of this Progress report are policy making institutions (governments, ministries, unions etc.), organizations for the re-integration of people with special needs, education and training institutions including those for people with special needs, primary and secondary schools using pottery and ICT within the frameworks of their regular school programmes, including schools for

children with special needs, organizations and companies developing ICT, pottery workshops, organizations, associations and institutes responsible for the re-integration of the deaf and hard of hearing, blind and partially-sighted, as well as those providing programmes which include pottery as

one of the possibilities for work therapy or creative workshops such as psychiatric hospitals or other associations and organizations working in the field of pottery and culture, as well as cultural heritage, each and every European citizen wanting to be innovative, creative and learn through ICT, regardless of his socio-economic background.

The objective of the ACTrain project is to develop innovative ICT-based training in ceramic design (50 lessons), accessible for everyone in Europe regardless of their socio-economic background, specially adapted for deaf and hard of hearing, blind and partially-sighted beneficiaries in 5 different languages. Experts initiated this innovation by implementing 6 piloted training programmes. They will also propose a Project Promotion Campaign, including dissemination of results at local, regional, national and European levels. The long-term objective of this project is to establish a firm foundation for the acceptance of innovative ICT methods and tools for the education and training of people with special needs.

The consortium is based on recognized expertise, and competence required to carry out the project. The experts come from relevant universities, schools for people with special needs, education, training, employment and social inclusion institutions having experience in the management of European projects, education and training and employment of people with special needs, as well as in the production of ceramic products, vocational rehabilitation and ICT development.

The partnership ACTrain has currently been developing innovative ICT-based training in cooperation with target groups. The conception of the scheduled complete training programme takes into account the special needs of the participants. The planned pedagogical methods and tools include photographs, videos, videos with sign language, audio descriptions, and audio guidance.

Major steps before 30 June, 2011: Kick-off meeting in Maribor, Slovenia; 2nd meeting in Patras, Greece; curriculum and training content descriptions for 20 lessons and drafts with structures for the whole cycle of 50 lessons; 3rd meeting in Torino, Italy; pilot testing groups designated in all partner countries; web-page [www.see-hear-touch.com](http://www.see-hear-touch.com) in service; evaluation instruments developed.

Plans for the second period of the project: further partnership technical meetings; further training contents and methods (to be finished by the end of December 2011), adaptations for different target groups; pilot trainings in September 2011 – June 2012; final international video-conference in

October 2012, video presentation on-line by the end of 2011; articles in the media, e-newsletters, networking.

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## 1. Project Objectives

- Development of an innovative ICT-based training in ceramic design;
- Development of a curriculum and training content description for 50 lessons in ceramic design;
- Development of adaptations for accessibility by the target groups: deaf, hard of hearing, blind and partially-sighted and other groups with special needs, as well as for every European citizen wanting to be creative and learn through ICT, regardless his socio-economic background;
- Exploitation of innovation in 6 pilot training groups;
- Setting-up a European wide project promotion campaign and the dissemination of outcomes.

### Involvement of the target groups and other partners

Contributors with knowledge and years of experience in the education, training, employment and social inclusion of deaf and hard of hearing, blind and partially-sighted people are directly involved in the project. They take an active part in the development of 50 lessons and their adaptations to the needs of the designated target groups. Each lesson is developed by all these parties under the same priority 'to raise the competence levels of people with special needs'. The target groups will learn about pottery in traditional class situations as well as by using ICT, even being blind or having other disabilities.

Deaf, hard of hearing, blind and partially-sighted people, together with other groups having special needs, as well as everyone in Europe who intends to learn about pottery and to produce it, can be directly involved in the future training.

To promote the project, the partnership is trying to induce different kinds of organisations to take parts in the project.

When creating and implementing the project's promotion campaign and dissemination plan, the partners cooperate closely with all target groups by trying to understand what their real needs, to fight against discriminations as well as to promote their social and professional inclusion.

A long term objective of this project is to establish a firm foundation for the acceptance of innovative ICT methods and tools as a sustainable element of education and training of people with special needs, after necessary adaptation. Pottery is chosen as an example of possible applications.

## 2. Project Approach

Apart from direct beneficiaries already listed below, also teachers, trainers and mentors working with them, as well as people without any visual and hearing impairment are concerned by the scheduled results of the project.

The partners decided to undertake this project for several reasons:

- Deaf, hard of hearing, blind and partially-sighted people do not have equal access to education and training, including ICT-based and these applications are often user-unfriendly for them;

- Existing teaching methods, materials and approaches are often disconnected from technological changes and ICT tools are insufficiently present in education and training systems;
- ICT-based education and training is inaccessible for many European citizens who have a modest socio-economic background.

The first important message the partners would like to convey is the statement that if the discrimination is to be avoided, the development of ICT-based training schemes should respect all groups of beneficiaries and, if necessary, should find ways of adapting corresponding training paths.

The next important component to take into account is the level of knowledge transmitted through education and training processes intended to people with special needs, often set up by excluding contents that are considered as either unnecessary or inaccessible for the people who cannot see or hear. The project intends to adapt any kind of knowledge to the needs of the target groups in order to make it accessible. In fact, the project cannot make a blind person see or a deaf person hear, but it can contribute to a better social and economic integration of the aimed population.

By practicing an 'ALL-INCLUSIVE-APPROACH' we make, at the current stage of the project, some following statements:

- Each partnership trying to develop innovation should be aware of the fact that certain questions need to be answered first, such as: Who are the target groups of the training? What are the needs of the target groups? How to make the ICT-based training accessible for all? How do the target groups learn? What kind of training do we want to develop and for whom? What does a blind person need? What does a deaf person need? How do the hard of hearing and partially-sighted learn? What level of knowledge should these 50 lessons include and why? Where can the planned training take place? What kind of knowledge do we need in each partner's country to become a potter? Do we aim at a basic training or advanced and what should be its final shape?
- It is of crucial and vital importance to include the target groups in the development, exploitation, evaluation and dissemination of the ICT-based training programme, which will include 50 lessons, worked out in close cooperation with them.

The foreseen training will include the following modules:

1. The meaning of clay;
2. Preparation for working with clay;
3. Environmental and Health protection - making sure everything is safe and healthy;
4. Ceramic design - modelling ceramic products;
  - 4.1. Planning and choosing a product;
  - 4.2. Modelling from a whole piece of clay - modelling a cup;
  - 4.3. Modelling using hand-rolled lengths of clay;
  - 4.4. Modelling using plaster moulds;
  - 4.5. Modelling using rolled out clay-slabs;
  - 4.6. Modelling using liquid clay and moulds;
  - 4.7. Creating using a potter's wheel;
5. Drying and firing ceramic products;
6. Glazing ceramic products;
7. Marketing - since selling the product comes at the end, it will be learned during the final module.

All these modules include knowledge that a person wanting to become a potter should learn according to the standards set by competent national bodies, like the Institute for Vocational Education and Training (CPI <http://www.cpi.si/>) in Slovenia. The proposed training is clearly practically-oriented, since it is important to practise as much as possible.

Since clay is a very useful material and can be used in many different situations, the ICT-based training in ceramic design could be exploited at home, at work, at school, in the process of vocational rehabilitation or as a work therapy, in a pottery complete course or by only a few lessons.

### 3. Project Shape and Outcomes

ACTrain is a 3-year project (January 2010 - December 2012) defined as 5 work packages:

#### 3.1. Project management

Each partner is in charge of one work package. In order to ensure monitoring of the project and its implementation a Project Management Group was established, including one expert from each partner's organization, to make sure that the planned results will be achieved on time and to budget, as contracted.

#### 3.2. Development of Innovative ICT-based training

This work package is essential for the production of all the scheduled modules and lessons, which will be available in 5 different languages (English, German, Italian, Greek and Slovenian). The presentation of the already achieved modules will be available on [www.see-hear-touch.com](http://www.see-hear-touch.com). A roll-up conceived for promotional purposes will be available in English and Slovene.

The partners have currently been developing 50 lessons in ceramic design adapted to the individual needs. The teaching material had been developed by experts in close cooperation with the target groups, so as to adapt it to their specific needs:

- lessons are structured according to the clarity principle with clear beginnings and endings;
- words hard to understand are explained and described if necessary;
- synonyms are avoided as far as possible for a better understanding of the course.

#### Specific arrangements

- for all participants with at least some access to the visual channel:
  - instructional videos and photos related to pottery will be available;
  - explanatory written texts will be available;
- for the blind and partially-sighted beneficiaries:
  - lessons will be downloadable so that the blind can read them using their already existing screen readers such as Jaws, Proteus, Amebis, Virgo, Apollo, Zoomtext, Braille Display or Braille Line;
  - all the 50 lessons, including photographs, will be available as an audio description, as a way to provide access to education and training for the blind and partially-sighted;
  - the Proteus Application will orally guide the blind and partially-sighted throughout the whole training in the form of audio navigation, so that they will not need additional ICT tools;
- for the deaf and hard of hearing beneficiaries:
  - sign-language videos will be available for all the 50 lessons so as to translate written and audio texts;
  - new signs can be developed in sign-language if necessary.

What is so special about the all-inclusive ICT-based training and the Proteus Application?

- as far as we know, it has never before been developed for these target groups;
- it is multilingual and adaptable to the needs of the user;

- it aims at four different target groups with quite opposite needs – deaf, hard of hearing, blind and partially-sighted;
- it is accessible for all regardless their socio-economic background;
- all-inclusive-ICT: participants will not have to buy additional programmes or hardware since the training can be performed on any modern computer with internet connection, where a voice guidance will be available for blind users,
- it can be used during distance-learning by everyone including people with special needs.
- it is transferable from ceramic design to many other fields,
- it possess a scalable architecture, so that the participants can add or hide different functions, depending on their needs.
- the application is optimised for best performance even on smaller screens.

### *Proteus – the name of the Computer Application (software) chosen for the aimed training course*

The name of this application - Proteus - comes from the Latin term *Proteus anguinus*, which designates a blind and a deaf amphibian, endemic to the subterranean waters of those caves within the Dinaric karst regions of Southern Europe. It lives in the waters that flow underground through this extensive limestone region, including the waters of the Soca River's basin near Trieste in Italy, through to southern Slovenia, south-western Croatia, and Herzegovina. This olm is the only species of its genus Proteus, the only European species of the family Proteidae, and the only European exclusively cave dwelling chordate. It is also occasionally called the "human fish" - because of its pink skin and small arms and legs, it also looks rather like a small human (*taken from Wikipedia and other websites*). The Logo of the project includes the elements that indicate eyes and ears because the application aims at the deaf and hard of hearing, blind and partially-sighted users.

### 3.3. Pilot training

As planned the partners had organised 6 training groups in order to carry out pilot training in the following centres:

1. OZARA d.o.o., Maribor, Slovenia,
2. School for the Deaf in Ljubljana, Slovenia,
3. Interurban Association for the Blind and Partially-Sighted, Maribor, Slovenia,
4. HRDC, Patras, Greece,
5. Istituto dei Sordi di Torino, Torino, Italy,
6. University Rehabilitation Institute Republic of Slovenia, Ljubljana, Slovenia.

Other organizations and training centres intend to practice the proposed training, such as the Centre for Hearing and Speech Maribor (<http://www.z-csg.mb.edus.si/>), which joined the project as an associate partner. All these organizations will be presented on the project main web-page: [www.see-hear-touch.com](http://www.see-hear-touch.com), as well as they will participate in the Dissemination plan.

### 3.4. Project promotion campaign, and dissemination plan

The partners have currently been developing a common dissemination strategy. Within this work package the following results have already been achieved:

- Dissemination: Since the partner URI-Soca (<http://www.ir-rs.si/>) is a member of the European Platform for Rehabilitation (EPR), it has published an article at EPR's web page: <http://www.epr.eu/index.php/activities/professional-development/250>. Moreover, contributions of outside organisations to the dissemination and exploitation activities are briefly described at [www.see-hear-touch.com](http://www.see-hear-touch.com), part 'Articles';

- Networking: all partners have currently been developing networks based on relevant institutions with the purpose of transferring the outcomes into mainstream practice, carrying out promotion, dissemination, anti-discrimination, and awareness raising activities at local, regional, national and European levels; activities accomplished by each partner are aligned with a common dissemination strategy.
- Web-page [www.see-hear-touch.com](http://www.see-hear-touch.com): is and will be the main source of information about the project, but is to be still enriched. The website includes the following categories:
  - ABOUT: It is explained what the project is about.
  - HOME: There is a short story about Sarah and Lucas, who want to become potters, but are deaf and blind and cannot learn pottery because there are no training centres in their country.
  - ARTICLES: This category describes the achieved results of the project.
  - PRODUCTS: Proteus Application with ICT-based training in ceramic design can already be accessed from this category. Although the whole 50 lesson training is not complete yet, the results can be followed here and used gradually.
  - PARTNERS: The partners of the project are presented.
  - CONTACTS: Contacts with the partners are available for everyone who may have questions.
  - Logos of all the partners, as well as of the EACEA and the disclaimer.

All the partners are responsible for the development of the webpage contents and translation into 5 European languages: Slovene, English, German, Italian and Greek.

### 3.5. Evaluation plan

The aim of this work package is to develop a methodological framework, evaluation instruments and recommendations in order to ensure an optimal progress of the project and of its results. These activities include the evaluation of the partner meetings, documents, curricula, training paths, ICT, management etc. The evaluation plan will be reinforced during the second part of the project achievement.

## 4. Partnership

The partnership is based upon 6 partners: 2 companies, 1 university, 1 institute, 1 foundation and 1 non-governmental organisation. The partners not only come from different European countries but also from different types of structures bringing years of experience and knowledge in the field of education, training, social inclusion and employment of people with special needs, who are directly connected with implementing the project's activities. All the partners also had developed strong networks that had been improved and enlarged within the framework of the ACTrain project.

As the partners and related experts are willing to learn and improve their own knowledge they agree that European projects provide many benefits such as:

- Improvement of management skills;
- Improvement of translation and language skills;
- Improvement of knowledge and experience in the field of ICT development, education and training of the target groups and people with special needs;
- Improvement of knowledge in pottery and maintaining the cultural heritage;
- Improvement of learning through ICT, and working with web-portals and web-sites;
- Improvement of writing skills;

- Learning about the needs of the target groups, and the development of all-inclusive ICT based education and training;
- Exchange of knowledge between partners and target groups;
- Learning about other cultures and working within the framework of a European team;
- Learning about education and training systems in partners' countries;
- Development of our own potentials in different fields.

Besides, associated and somehow informal partners are also an inevitable part of the 'European Team' built up for the project, like Slovene subcontractors who experienced training paths and gave the partners an immediate feedback on the development of lessons and the ICT: Ljubljana School for Deafs (<http://www.zgnl.si/>), Interurban Association for Blind and Partially-Sighted people in Maribor (<http://www.drustvo-mdssmb.si/>). These organisations are invited to contribute in their own most creative way: some of them wish to learn more about the project, experiment training, become an associate partner, improve ICT methods applied to education and training of people with disabilities or organize workshops in ceramic design.

## **5. Plans for the Future**

Within the framework of the 5 work packages which compose the project, the following achievements are planned:

### 5.1. Project management (major events):

- Organisation of the 5th meeting, Ljubljana, Slovenia (October 2012),
- Submission of The Final report in February 2013.

### 5.2. Development of an innovative ICT-based training:

- Development and improvement of the planned lessons by November 2011
- Progressive construction of educational strategies adapted to specific contexts in each partner country,
- Progressive and detailed analysis of the pilot training actions.

### 5.3. Pilot training

- 6 pilot training groups are scheduled between September 2011 and June 2012.

### 5.4. Project promotion campaign and dissemination plan:

- 4th meeting in Klagenfurt, Austria (January 2012);
- The Final International (Video) conference (October 2012);
- On-line video presentation (end of 2011);
- Articles in some selected media;
- E-newsletters sent automatically to selected organizations;
- Networking: partners continue to disseminate the project results among relevant institutions and organizations.

### 5.5. Evaluation plan

A more consistent evaluation of the training with ICT components and Proteus application has started in September 2011, in order to reinforce unofficial evaluations already carried out in all pilot groups. In fact, project evaluation has been an on-going process through the whole project life time, but will now be formalised and reinforced, in order to make project results even better.

## **6. Contribution to EU policies**

The ACTrain project intends to contribute to several EU policies within the framework of the Lifelong Learning Programme:

*\* Improving the quality, attractiveness, and accessibility of opportunities for lifelong learning, as well as contributing to the increased participation in lifelong learning by people of all ages, including those with special needs and disadvantaged groups, regardless of their socio-economic backgrounds.*

ICT-based training in ceramic design disseminated among different institutions and organizations interested in pottery, learning through ICT, education and training of people with special needs.

*\* Supporting the development of innovative ICT-based content, services, pedagogies, and practice for lifelong learning.*

The approach of the partnership is to develop an innovative ICT-based training that has never been achieved as such a concept in the field of pottery before.

Specific objectives of the Leonardo da Vinci programme:

*\* Supporting participants in training and further training activities in the acquisition and using of knowledge, skills and qualifications, in order to facilitate personal development, employability, and participation in the European labour market.*

Everyone in Europe regardless his socio-economic background is invited to participate in the training, to gain knowledge in pottery and learn through ICT, improve his hand skills and exchange knowledge at different levels, improve social networks, social inclusion and personal development, participate in the development of ICT methods for the education and training of people with special needs.

*\* Support improvements in quality and innovations of vocational education and training systems, institutions, and practices.*

The partnership ACTrain offers these possibilities for 4 target groups with opposite needs; blind, partially sighted, deaf and hard of hearing.

*\* The Priority: to raise the competence levels of people with special needs.*

At least 70 participants will be involved in ICT-based training paths using the latest technology available. They will learn about pottery with ICT methods. Thus, they will improve their hand-skills and theoretical knowledge.

*\* Horizontal policies: making provisions for learners with special needs and in particular by helping to promote their integration into mainstream education and training, promoting equality between men*

*and women and contributing to combating all forms of discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation.*

Pilot training is being carried out in schools and institutions as a part of their regular school programme. Since the target audience for the promotion and dissemination activities are different kinds of organizations the partnership will promote the integration of learners with special needs into mainstream education and training.

