



Executive Agency, Education, Audiovisual and Culture

APPEARANCE MATTERS

"Optimizing the outcomes for vocational guidance counseling and vocational training"

Appearance Matters – optimising the outcomes for vocational guidance counseling and vocational training

Progress Report

Public Part

Project information

Project acronym: AM

Project title: Appearance Matters - optimising the outcomes for vocational guidance counseling and vocational training

Project number: 527463-LLP-2012-UK-LEONARDO-LMP

Sub-programme or KA: Leonardo da Vinci Programme - Multilateral projects for Development of Innovation

Project website: www.appearancetraining.com

Reporting period: From 01/11/2012
To 31/10/2013

Report version: 1.0

Date of preparation: 26/11/2013

Beneficiary organisation: University West of England

Project coordinator: Martin Persson

Project coordinator organisation: University West of England

Project coordinator telephone number: +44 7826 713437

Project coordinator email address: martin.persson@uwe.ac.uk

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission.

This publication [communication] reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

© 2008 Copyright Education, Audiovisual & Culture Executive Agency.
The document may be freely copied and distributed provided that no modifications are made, that the source is acknowledged and that this copyright notice is included.

Executive Summary

The project Appearance Matters is focused on developing training materials for individuals involved in providing vocational training and/or guidance counseling. The objective of the training materials is to generate an awareness in recipients of the potential impacts of disfigurement and/or appearance-related distress on the guidance counseling and vocational training outcomes for their clients and trainees. The training materials are also designed to promote a social dialogue amongst recipients and other practitioners and consequently broaden awareness of how to detect, address and ameliorate appearance-related distress, discrimination and stigma. Research indicates that if the service providers (vocational trainers and guidance counselors) have limited or no understanding and awareness of how appearance-related distress can influence young people and adults, they may fail to help their clients achieve optimal outcomes. They may also unintentionally contribute to further social exclusion amongst this client group.

One in five people have a disfigurement, from congenital defects, disease, trauma or medical treatment. For many, this 'difference' negatively impacts self-esteem and social functioning. Individuals with disfigurement encounter stigma and are discriminated against in educational and vocational situations. The mental health of young people continues to be a major cause of concern in Europe. For young European people between the ages of 15 to 24, there has been a pronounced deterioration in mental health. There is an increase of symptoms such as unease, anxiety, sadness, sleep disorders and hospital care to treat depression or self harm. There are now well-established links between appearance concerns, psychological wellbeing and a number of health-compromising behaviours, including drug and alcohol misuse, the avoidance or over-indulgence in exercise and the non-medical use of steroids to increase muscle bulk in males. Young people with poor body image are at greater risk of initiating smoking and continuing to smoke as an appetite suppressant. Many individuals engage in poor nutritional intake, fasting or skipping meals or the non-medical use of laxatives, diuretics and diet pills use in order to reduce their weight. These consequences can influence educational performance, it is established that restrictive eating is associated with a range of detrimental cognitive effects, including reduced attention span and impaired memory. Students with lower grades are more likely to report that body image concerns interfered with their academic performance. In a recent study of 77,000 adults in the UK, over 60% felt ashamed of how they looked. People who are overweight and are victims of weight stigma are more likely to report poor psychosocial outcomes. Appearance issues may be particularly challenging for migrants and others changing cultural contexts, and may contribute to social exclusion. People from other socially disadvantaged groups may also be disproportionately affected. Girls from lower performing schools place more importance on being attractive compared with girls from higher performing schools.

This is a very high quality, multidisciplinary and committed consortium that represents academic disciplines from health psychology, public health, pedagogy and adult education together with highly experienced practitioners in vocational and

guidance counselling. By involving world leading experts in appearance psychology (a sub-discipline of health psychology) from the UK together with public health and pedagogical experts from Lithuania in combination with vocational and guidance practitioners from Austria, Italy, Norway and Sweden, the project partners are ensuring that theoretically sound material that of high pragmatic relevance will be developed.

The expert partner in appearance psychology has used their expertise to develop a theoretical paper about psychological and social aspects of appearance concerns in relevance to vocational training and guidance. The other partners have formed strategic working groups in their countries, whose role is to inform and advise on the outcomes. Using the expertise and knowledge of the strategic group, desk-based research and interviews, each partner wrote a national report, which addresses the impacts of disfigurement and body image from their country's perspective. Based upon the information in these national reports the expert partner has developed the modular training materials for vocational trainers and guidance counsellors.

The outcomes so far in the project have been a) the production of flyers in each language b) a theoretical report c) national reports d) a synthesis report e) draft training modules f) web site www.appearancetraining.com

During the coming year, the training modules will be evaluated and finalized. In conjunction with the theoretical report and the synthesis of national reports a complete training package will be finalised, and trialled with groups of vocational trainers and guidance counselors in each partner country. The training package will be presented at a multiplier event at the final project meeting.

Table of Contents

1. PROJECT OBJECTIVES.....	7
2. PROJECT APPROACH.....	9
3. PROJECT OUTCOMES & RESULTS	11
4. PARTNERSHIPS	13
5. PLANS FOR THE FUTURE	14
6. CONTRIBUTION TO EU POLICIES	16

1. Project Objectives

The objective of this project is to promote understanding in vocational trainers and guidance counsellors about disfigurement and/or appearance concerns and this has on affected individuals as well as the barriers and discrimination these people encounter in European societies

One in five people have a disfigurement and 60-80% of young people and adults experience significant levels of appearance dissatisfaction. European citizens who are affected by distress and dissatisfaction related to their appearance are at risk for poorer psychosocial health, educational performance, stigmatisation and discrimination in current society. If lifelong learning providers are not aware of these risks, they themselves may exacerbate the challenges experienced by this group. It is paramount that service providers are educated about the risks and consequences of appearance dissatisfaction in order to optimise vocational outcomes and promote social inclusion in this population.

Using materials during the life of this project, the primary objective is that following training, participants will be able to recognise at risk of negative psychological, physical and social outcomes resulting from appearance dissatisfaction. Participants will understand how this group is at higher risk of stigma and exclusion in our European society. For example, a vocational trainee or client who has a visible disfigurement and/or appearance dissatisfaction is at greater risk of poor psychosocial health. This may have a negative influence on their engagement in society as well as their quality of life. They may also experience discrimination and stigma on the basis of their appearance. This may further affect their psychological wellbeing and may generate helplessness about their current situation. These impacts can mean that the client is very difficult to counsel and to support in becoming self-activated. As levels of appearance dissatisfaction are currently very high in European (and other) societies, it is paramount that trainers and guidance counsellors learn to recognise the symptoms of distress and are able to offer their clients appropriate techniques to become self-activating and to make appropriate career decisions concerning vocational learning and employment. Practitioners will also learn to recognise the importance of developing networks of professionals from different areas who may encounter individuals with disfigurement and/or appearance dissatisfaction, in order to share the expertise more broadly.

The trainees and practising vocational guidance counsellors and vocational teachers who undergo the training will develop skills that make them more innovative in their everyday practice. They will be enabled to ask new questions and consider new reasons for the lack of progress of some clients, especially those with disfigurement and/or appearance dissatisfaction. With these newly acquired skills in their job, they can create an environment that promotes social inclusion and provides adequate support for this target group. To facilitate optimal outcomes in this project, the

partners include highly experienced vocational trainers and guidance counsellors, all of whom are contributing to the development of the training course material.

The ultimate beneficiaries are people with disfigurement and/or appearance dissatisfaction. Their particular needs are often disregarded and consequently many may be prevented from receiving the full benefits from participation in vocational learning program and/or the guidance counselling they receive.

2. Project Approach

Each partner (except the expert partner) has formed a strategic working group drawn from staff from vocational training and guidance and other relevant stakeholders. This group will operate throughout the project. Its role is to inform and advise the partner and to assess outputs as they are developed.

The partners from Austria, Italy, Lithuania, Norway and Sweden have produced national reports that address disfigurement and body image issues from the perspective of their own countries, the potential links with health-compromising behaviours, how vocational trainers and guidance counsellors deal or identify appearance issues and how these issues manifest themselves for migrants, people changing cultural contexts, or others experiencing social disadvantage. The report will also describe each country's specific context together with details about how vocational training and guidance functions in each country. The partners are also engaging in dialogue with their strategic working group members about appearance issues in relation to vocational training and guidance, and have administered body image questionnaires recommended by the expert partner to a subgroup of their clients and their trainers in order to inform their national reports.

During this first year of the project, the expert partner has drawn on relevant books, articles, conference papers and their own expertise to write a theoretical paper on psychological and social aspects of appearance concerns and how it relates to vocational training and guidance. The expert partner is also compiling a synthesis report based upon the national reports with a particular focus upon the appearance relevant issues described by the partners.

Using the theoretical report and the national reports together with feedback from partners, the expert partner has developed a training curriculum that includes information about the impacts of appearance dissatisfaction together with tools, tips and methods for addressing these. The curriculum is designed to develop the understanding, skills and competences of vocational guidance counsellors and vocational trainers in the support they give to people with disfigurement and/or appearance dissatisfaction. Accordingly, the ultimate beneficiaries will be individuals with disfigurement and/or appearance dissatisfaction whose needs will be better addressed in relation to their vocational training and employment prospects with the added bonus of improving their psychological wellbeing and social functioning.

The expert partner has implemented the evaluation of the progress of the project. The success of the project will be assessed through an adaptation of the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) model for self-assessment together with a continuous dialogue between the partners via electronic communication, phone and at the physical meetings. The quality management plan is linked to the milestones set in the project plan. The quality management for the developed products will take place during the second year of the project.

The dissemination plans include the following main strands: 1) the strategic working groups in the partners countries disseminate through direct personal contact 2) partners are setting up a strategic dissemination network to be contacted by mail and email 3) web site – www.appearancetraining.com 4) leaflets in national languages 5) links from partners' web sites 6) participation in relevant local, national and international seminars, workshops and conferences

All partners are skilled in dissemination and members of strategic working groups have been asked to make their own dissemination plans, which have been incorporated into the overall plan. The partners complete their dissemination records and return them to the Work Package Leader every 6 months in order to monitor dissemination activities. This forms part of the quality management process. Dissemination activities are tailored according to the progress of the project.

It is also worth mentioning that Euronews – generation y made a reportage about the project. This reportage will be broadcasted on Euronews 40 times between 18/11/2013 to 01/12/2013 reaching 400 million households in 155 countries via cable, digital satellite and terrestrial windows in 13 different languages.

<http://www.youtube.com/user/eurogeny>

3. Project Outcomes & Results

In accordance with the objectives and milestones predicted for the first year of the project the consortium has delivered the following outcomes & results. All the outcomes and results can be found at the website: www.appearancetraining.com

1. The partners from Austria, Italy, Lithuania, Norway and Sweden have delivered a National Reports based upon the agreed template.
2. The expert partner has produced a theoretical report on the on psychological and social aspects of appearance concerns. This report will be used as a supplement to the training curriculum currently being devised.
3. The expert partner has also produced a synthesis report based upon the national reports, which focuses on the social and psychosocial aspects of appearance issues.

Based upon these reports, the expert partner has developed an 8 module training course for vocational trainers and guidance counsellors. These modules were presented to all the partners as a full-day training course in October 2013, at which included that the partners provided feedback on the developed material. The expert partner has incorporated these changes into the modules.

4. The training modules
 1. General Appearance – Intro
 2. Psychological impacts of appearance dissatisfaction
 3. The impact of appearance dissatisfaction on health
 4. Social and Cultural
 5. Improving Body Image
 6. How to recognize symptoms of appearance-related distress
 7. CBT approaches and sources of support (Part I)
 8. CBT approaches and sources of support (Part II)

These draft modules are available on the website in a pdf draft document.

In accordance with the dissemination objectives of the project the following outcomes & results have been achieved:

5. Website: www.appearancetraining.com
 - a. Summary of the project in each partners language.
 - b. All current outputs are available to be downloaded.
6. Flyers
 - a. A flyer in each language has been produced.
 - i. Available on the website to be downloaded.

- ii. 100 printed copies in each language have been produced, with a further 200 copies in English for dissemination at conferences and other European meetings.

There have been 3 project meetings during the first year of the project:

1. Kick-off meeting in Vienna, Austria December 2012.
 - a. At this meeting the objectives of the project were reviewed, and detailed Action Plans developed to meet these objectives were developed
 - b. The expert partner delivered a lecture about appearance psychology. The lecture is available to be downloaded in a pdf format on the web site.
 - c. The management and the communication aspects of the project were agreed upon.
2. Second meeting in Kristianstad, Sweden, June 2013
 - a. The partners delivered presentations based on their National reports.
 - b. The expert partner delivered a presentation based on the theoretical aspects of the project.
 - c. The next steps forward were discussed and agreed upon.
 - d. An update on all the work packages in the project was provided.
3. Third meeting in Empoli, Italy, October 2013
 - a. The expert partner delivered the draft 8 module training package to the partners.
 - i. The partners provided feedback and suggested modifications to the developed material.
 - b. Progress on all the active work packages was reviewed.

4. Partnerships

Negative psychological, social, educational and vocational impacts together with appearance-related discrimination and stigma occur across Europe. The benefits of a European-wide approach are as follows, based upon the experience of the project to date:

1. Differing national education systems produce different approaches to knowledge acquisition, ranging from theoretical to pragmatic, and we have found great value in drawing on a range of approaches;
2. Although we have much in common, we do have different organisational practices in one country that are not found in another and this contributes to a fruitful exchange of knowledge;
3. Disfigurement and appearance dissatisfaction are influenced by cultural perceptions and by engaging in a European consortium we are able to better understand cultural differences and how to develop appropriate training material;
4. Customisation of training materials to accommodate cultural differences will be informed through the testing phase and throughout the life of the project.

The innovative nature of this project lies in applying knowledge about the causes and consequences of appearance dissatisfaction to the context of vocational training and guidance counselling and by adding a multi-country partnership we are ensuring that the developed material is functional in different social and cultural settings. By increasing the awareness of trainers and counsellors, this project will contribute to reducing discrimination in these settings and to optimising outcomes for service users.

5. Plans for the Future

For the next phases for the project are as follows:

1. The partners in Austria, Italy, Lithuania, Norway and Sweden will undertake the following tasks:
 - a. Translation of the training curriculum into each partner language.
 - b. Deliver the training modules to a minimum of 5 teachers, vocational trainers and/or guidance counsellors in their respective organisations and provide feedback in accordance to a template developed by the expert partner.
 - c. The partners will also present the training modules to the members of their strategic working group and will elicit feedback.
 - d. The expert partner will incorporate the feedback and suggestions for changes to the training modules.
 - i. At this stage it might be necessary to develop country specific versions of the modules, depending on the feedback received.
 - e. Translation of the final version(s) of the 8 training modules
2. The fourth meeting will take place in Klaipeda, Lithuania (March 2014).
 - a. Following the incorporation of feedback, the expert partner will present the revised version of the complete curriculum for a full day training course, as follows:
 - i. The theoretical report
 - ii. The synthesis report based upon the national reports
 - iii. The 8 training modules
3. Each partner will arrange a seminar in their own country for new or existing vocational guidance counsellors and vocational trainers. This will contribute to the exploitation and sustainability of the project outcomes.
 - a. The partners in Austria, Italy, Norway and Sweden will each have the participation of 20 – 30 individuals.
 - b. The Lithuanian partner will arrange seminars for a total of 100 participants.
4. The partnership will arrange a multiplier conference “Appearance Matters - A training resource for vocational teachers and guidance counsellors about the impact of appearance dissatisfaction and disfigurement on trainees and clients” together with the final meeting of the project.
 - a. There is an allocated budget to invite 10 – 12 participants from other organisations located in other European countries.

- b. The partnership is exploring the possibility of arranging the conference in conjunction with another relevant European project final conference in order to reach a greater number of potential stakeholders.

6. Contribution to EU policies

A key publication, CEDEFOP, *Professionalising career guidance*, 2009, highlights that “*all clients have diverse needs, some of which may result in disadvantage or discrimination. Some needs are apparent to others, and may be the subject of legislation and codes of practice. Other needs may be hidden, and may include complex issues such as self-stereotyping ... The requirement for the career guidance practitioner is to extend their knowledge and understanding to the fullest reasonable extent in their work situation and to strive constantly for the highest degree of reflection on their own practice*” (p 77). This document refers to specialised guidance for unemployed and disabled people, women, older people and refugees, but notably there is no mention of how disfigurement and/or body image concerns can negatively affect the vocational training or the guidance counselling process.

This project will contribute to improving the quality and efficiency of education and training for vocational guidance counsellors and vocational trainers. They will achieve an enhanced understanding about the causes and consequences of disfigurement and appearance dissatisfaction in the general public, the impacts on affected individuals and the challenges, stigma and discrimination this population can encounter in our society. It is innovative course that will generate new knowledge and skills in practising and trainee vocational guidance counsellors and vocational teachers, who as a result will be empowered to facilitate an environment that promotes social inclusion and provides appropriate support for affected young people and adults.

(Objectives of the Lifelong Learning Programme: LLP-Obj-a: To contribute to the development of quality lifelong learning and to promote high performance, innovation and a European dimension in systems and practices in the field; **Specific Objectives of the Action:** LEO-SpObj-b: To support improvements in quality and innovation in vocational education and training systems, institutions and practices; LEO-OpObj-3: To facilitate the development of innovative practices in the field of vocational education and training other than at tertiary level, and their transfer, including from one participating country to others; **Priority 3:** Developing Vocational Skills considering the labour market needs – New Skills for New Jobs; **ET2020:** Education and Training 2020 Work Programme)

The ultimate beneficiaries of this project will be European citizens who experience distress as the result of disfigurement or appearance dissatisfaction, with associated negative impacts on their psychosocial health and educational and/or workplace performance. Individuals who look different from the current societal standards are at considerable risk for discrimination and stigmatisation. Their special needs are often disregarded and may consequently prevent them from receiving the full benefits of participation in vocational learning and the labour market. This project will directly combat these impacts by enhancing the quality and efficiency of education and training provided by vocational guidance counsellors and vocational trainers, resulting efforts to promote equality and social inclusion for this target group in current European society.

(Objectives of the Lifelong Learning Programme: LLP-Obj-f: To contribute to increased participation in lifelong learning by people of all ages, including those with special needs and disadvantaged groups, regardless of their socio-economic background; **Horizontal policies:** **SpecNeed:** Making provision for learners with special needs, and in particular by helping to promote

their integration into mainstream education and training and **Discr**: 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; **SOCIAL**: Social dialogue at community level)

